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NEW ENGLAND IN FRANCE
1917–1919

MAJOR-GENERAL CLARENCE R. EDWARDS

NEW ENGLAND IN FRANCE

1917–1919

A HISTORY OF THE
TWENTY-SIXTH DIVISION U.S.A.

BY

EMERSON GIFFORD TAYLOR

MAJOR, INFANTRY, 26TH DIVISION U. S. A.
ACTING ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF

With Maps and Illustrations

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CHAPTER I
ORIGINS

ANY account of an American combat division participating in the late European war, written while the color of its life under fire is yet undimmed, inevitably must incur the danger of lapsing into mere reminiscence. One who has shared the life of a body of fighting troops in the field is like to record concerning it matters which are less the facts of history than the bases of the writer's own enthusiasm or prejudice.

But there is vitality in a tale of events, the echoes of which are still sounding. There exists a certain value, for the historian of a later generation, in the fresh recollections and impressions of the men who played an active part in those events. And so, if only for these reasons, it may not be amiss to set down, at this time, the annals of such a division of the American Expeditionary Force as the Twenty-Sixth, which fought in France throughout the entire period of American participation in the World War, in 1918.

For the record of the Twenty-Sixth is particularly interesting. The circumstances of its organization, its personnel, its record as a fighting unit, are all singularly rich as reflecting not only national and sectional characteristics, but also the typical traits of American fighting troops in the field, on the march, in billets, or in the heat of battle. The story of the Twenty-Sixth is of American citizens, non-professional soldiery, who volunteered to take up arms in defense of their country's cause, and of the manner in which American citizens do bear themselves in action. And it is in this light, possibly, that the following pages may be read with clearest understanding.

To one unacquainted with military matters, it appears perhaps unnecessary, oftentimes, to take such careful account, as must the military historian, of elements in an organization which appear not directly related to its character as a body of troops equipped and trained for giving battle. Numerical strength, the commander and his staff, proficiency, fighting spirit, physical condition, equipment and supplies, are, like the weather and the state of the roads, obviously important to consider in reviewing the work of any unit in action. But almost equally important, it may be said, for a clear understanding of an armed force's operations in the field, are such matters as its origin, character and identity of its personnel, and the circumstances of its creation. To understand the nature of the French defense of Verdun in 1916, or that of the British retreat from Mons prior to the Battle of the Marne in 1914, one must accurately appraise the character of the forces engaged. Similarly, one cannot get a true approximation of the work of the subject of this history, without showing what kind of men were brought together to form the Twenty-Sixth Division, from what environment they sprang, and under what circumstances they were organized.

In accordance with plans for the organization of the national defense perfected after the entry of the United States into the war, April 6, 1917, the Twenty-Sixth Division of the United States Army was created by a consolidation and reorganization of the state troops of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.[1] A territorial scheme for the organization of divisions of the new army already projected was being put into operation quite generally. Admirable in its conception, it was valuable as contributing to establish an *esprit de corps* among the troops to a degree perhaps not always appreciated in the earlier days of the Expeditionary Force's activities in France. Under its provisions, New England men brought into service under the selective draft were grouped together in the Seventy-Sixth Division; in the State of New York were raised the Twenty-Seventh (National Guard) and Seventy-Seventh (National Army) Divisions; and elsewhere, throughout the country, the effort was made to combine in divisions, with local territorial affiliations, state troops or the drafted men of the several States or neighboring localities. A notable exception to this rule was the creation of the Forty-Second Division out of National Guard troops from all sections of the country, for the purpose of emphasizing at the outset the national character of the new American armies.

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[1] Numerical designations of divisions in the land forces of the United States, created for participation in the European War in 1917, were assigned according

The New England National Guard of 1917 meant, as a fighting force, much or little according to the angle from which it was considered. A system by which troops recruited, organized, officered, and maintained under the authority of the State, were at the same time equipped and trained under the supervision and direction of the War Department, which were partly dependent on the financial support of the State and partly on that of the federal authorities, was not calculated to produce uniformly good results as to discipline and proficiency. The danger of a

to the following plan: To divisions of the Regular Army were given the numbers One to Twenty-Five inclusive; to divisions formed from the National Guard (state troops in federal service), the numbers Twenty-Six to Seventy-Five inclusive; to divisions of the National Army (composed of men inducted into the army under the Selective Service Act), the numbers Seventy-Six to One Hundred inclusive. Numerical designations of infantry, artillery, and engineer units with the National Guard and National Army divisions commenced, by an extension of this system, with 101 to 104 for infantry regiments in the Twenty-Sixth Division, 101 to 103 for artillery regiments, 101 for the engineer regiment. Similarly, the infantry regiments of the Seventy-Sixth Division, for example, were numbered 301 to 304 inclusive.

clash between the controlling authorities was always present. On the one side, the War Department, properly intent on exercising such close control as it deemed vitally important in order to train and equip the state troops as effective fighting units of a national army, tended constantly to extend and impose its own regulations; on the other side, the States, appropriating large sums annually for the maintenance of the state forces, and jealous of federal control even while acknowledging its necessity, inclined inevitably to interpret the requirements of the War Department in accordance with local conditions or local military traditions. That the system did not break down is largely due to recognition by state authorities of the practical advantages to be derived from strict conformity with federal requirements regarding drill, discipline, and instruction if the troops were to be properly trained for active service. It became a point of pride in all the state military organizations to pass creditably the periodical inspections of the federal officers; hard and conscientious work was done at the prescribed drills, at the summer camps of instruction, and in the schools for officers and non-commissioned officers. In general, good care was taken that the arms and equipment issued by the War Department were maintained in serviceable condition. Standards varied, even in companies of the same regiment, but a great amount of military knowledge was taught and learned. Good was accomplished furthermore by the officers and non-commissioned officers of the Regular Army who were detailed to the several States for duty as Inspector-Instructors. They brought to the state troops the best ideals of the "old army" respecting discipline, training, care of property, and efficiency in the field; they were able to transmit to the federal authorities through the Militia Bureau, along with their routine reports, an accurate and intelligent interpretation of the spirit, qualifications of officers, and the general attitude of both officers and men constituting the state units, which was of immense value. The work of these inspectors, extending through a period of years preceding the call of the state troops into federal service, was further of very great importance as interpreting the Regular Army and the New England National Guard to one another.

But the conscientious work of those responsible for the efficiency of the local military units could not accomplish more than an approximation of the ideal of perfection. The too brief weekly drill periods, the annual field instruction of but six days' duration, the impossibility of enforcing a uniform standard of discipline and proficiency for officers, were only a few of the difficulties against which headway had to be made under the existing system. Wrong in principle (in the light of present-day requirements), exposed to all the dangers of a dual and divided control, admittedly faulty by many in the National Guard service itself, regarded as a most unsatisfactory makeshift by all those forces intent on building up, under federal control, a strong reserve for the Regular Army, it is surprising that the system did not break down altogether. To its opponents, it appeared incredible that the system was able to produce troops who, in the spring of 1917, were even approximately fit for consideration as the basis of a field force for active operations against the enemy.

For other elements than the inherent defects of the National Guard system had tended for months to reduce the effectiveness of the New England troops. The period following their hard field service and training on the Mexican Border in 1916 was one of disintegration. Scores of officers resigned their commissions in the autumn of that year; hundreds of enlisted men, as their terms expired, left the service at once. New enlistments were very rare. Throughout the winter of 1916–17 the effective force of units was reduced to a minimum; military interest was at a low ebb. The prospect, furthermore, of securing commissions in the Officers' Reserve Corps by a three months' course of intensive study and work at Plattsburg or another of the newly established War Department training-camps, attracted away from the Guard organizations a large number of valuable junior company officers and sergeants. The determined drive made at this time to replace the existing system of national defense, such as it was, by another soundly based on the principle of universal service, militated strongly against the efficiency of the state troops. The federal inspections of the Guard, held in the late winter months, were far from being universally satisfactory.

Judged by ordinary standards, viewed from the angle by which a fighting force is ordinarily estimated as efficient or the reverse in proportion as it can show numbers, discipline, long training, and high morale, the New England National Guard, in the spring of 1917, could not have presented a very reassuring sight to those who were anxiously weighing the potential fighting value of each organized unit of the meager national establishment. But elements not appearing on the surface, qualities which only intimate knowledge of the state troops could discern, were present to lend strength, solidarity, a spirit of patriotism, and a foundation on which to build a division of fighting men, which are worth study. What was there, latent, in the ranks of the little companies and batteries, what in the headquarters of the regiments and brigades, which, under the red sun of war, came into bloom like unsuspected flowers?

In the first place, the men who were to compose the Twenty-Sixth Division, as they assembled in their camps for mobilization, were all volunteers, from highest ranking officer to lowliest raw recruit. They wanted to fight. Not a man who enlisted after January, 1917, but felt, clearly enough, the imminence of the call to active service, with all that service in the war then raging must mean. Hundreds joined the New England troops that spring because they felt, quite simply, that to enlist was their duty as good citizens; hundreds were touched by the spirit of the Great Adventure; other hundreds desired ardently to rejoin the colors, now that real action was in sight instead of a round of armory drills. The rumor that the National Guard would be first overseas after the Regulars was the spur that pricked forward an ardent thousand; the fact that one's friends were going in the home-town company, proud of their new distinction, brought forward a thousand more. Young men of foreign blood enlisted for the sake of aiding their brothers already in the fight on the Allied side. Whatever the spring that gave the impetus, the young fellows who filled the ranks of the old regiments during the late spring and summer enlisted because they wished to be counted with the foremost. And that spirit — the spirit of the patriotic volunteer — was as gold in the crucible. It was the element which gave a precious value to the whole alloy.

Another important contribution to the strength of the Guard regiments was the local affection and support which they all commanded. Units of the New England militia had had a long history. Many of them dated their organization back to the days of the Revolution or even earlier; they were lineal descendants of Colonial train-bands or of Washington's brigades. Many had played a gallant part in previous wars of the Nation. The fathers and grandfathers of not a few company officers had been captains or lieutenants in the same company a generation or two before. For years the whole military spirit of a town had been expressed in the local company, troop, or battalion. A score of cities and towns, all over the area, had, each in its warm heart's care, the well-being and creditable record of a group of its own "boys." It is quite true that there had come periods when this community interest was lukewarm. Only a few short months before the declaration of war, as has been said, this interest was languid to the point of inanition. But once the imagination was touched, once active service was imminent, the heart of the community overflowed in affection and practical assistance. Even obscurely, it was felt that the soldier could only be helped by knowing that his town was backing him. And what enormous value to morale this feeling was proved to possess, those can bear witness who knew, from intimate association, what the New England soldier was like in the field. Volunteers for war service, who feel themselves sure of the support and love of their fellow townsmen, who feel responsible for the good name of their home-grown regiment, make good fighting material.

A further asset on the side of *esprit de corps* was that the troops of every New England State were employed in making up the new organization. Not only was there a healthy rivalry between local units; but further, it soon became evident that the New Englanders, as a group, felt placed on their mettle to outshine the divisions from other parts of the country. From the very outset, a solidarity was present, in the germ. It was a spirit which was of the greatest value when, in the active competition of the training areas in France and in the days of field service, the Twenty-Sixth found itself being judged by the same standards as the best divisions in the army, old and new.

It will be asked: What military knowledge and experience did these troops possess? This varied greatly. The flood of recruits poured in larger measure into some regiments than others; the discharge of old men who had dependent relatives, or were of alien enemy parentage or birth, took from some a large proportion, while other units suffered only a little in this respect. The changing policy of the War Department in the spring of 1917, by which recruiting for the National Guard was ordered, then stopped, then ordered to be resumed with new energy, had the general effect of chilling enthusiasm in all quarters for that branch of the service. Drill and instruction were taken up with intelligent energy, however, from the moment the Guard units were called into federal service (at various dates following March 20). At once scattered as a protection against enemy *sabotage* on lines of communication and transportation, at centers of the production of munitions and supplies, and around public utilities, the new men all obtained experience in guard duty, close-order drill, military courtesy, sanitation, care of government property, and a taste of life under conditions of active service. It was a duty of value in developing non-commissioned officers; it taught battalion and company officers a great deal regarding the handling and supply of an organization the units of which are widely scattered. Of the older men the great majority had had months of field service in 1916 on the Border. The Guard included also an exceptionally large number of officers, both staff and line, who had been in the military service for years, for sheer love of it. Many of these had been in the Spanish War; they included scores of well-qualified rifle and pistol instructors; there were many experienced adjutants, ordnance officers, and quartermasters; the medical personnel was very strong. The officers knew the book, and they knew the men under their command. This last is worth emphasizing. Not only had the company, battalion, and regimental leaders successfully passed all the War Department efficiency tests; but also they were intimately acquainted with the characters, worth, and personality of the individuals over whom they had control. They came from the same town as their men; they often had brothers in the ranks. Now this may be objected to in a military organization. Indeed, it had been a favorite charge against the National Guard system that company officers were usually elected by the enlisted personnel. Higher authority might appoint them; but the designation to lead came from below, in most cases. It was argued that an officer so selected was hampered in his application of discipline, was apt to play favorites, could secure his start by methods of the small politician. Troops should obey the orders of any officer. All this can hardly be denied; but the fluent criticism failed oftentimes to take into account the many checks and balances which federal and state regulations placed about the elective system. And it was a fact that, even when a man had started on his commissioned career by methods not of the best, he was like to develop, under the pressure of new responsibilities, quite beyond expectation. It is also true that, in the vast majority of cases, the National Guard officers in the Twenty-Sixth Division were such as any authority would have been glad to commission. It was one of the many paradoxes of the system — the thing worked, in spite of the many obvious reasons why it should not. A point, moreover, most important to observe, is that these National Guard officers appear to have done admirably in laboring to insure the comfort and well-being of the enlisted men. In procuring food, shelter, and clothing for their troops they were assiduous and efficient; they defended the rights and privileges of their fellows most tenaciously. If there was any danger to discipline, in that officers of such habits should get into the way of babying their men, or of seeking popularity by a cheap and easy means — which was a charge easier to draw than to prove — it is sure that this danger, if it existed, was more than balanced by an increased devotion and a closer bond of mutual understanding.

Such, then, were the men who made up the Yankee Division as first constituted. Excellent material physically; with a large proportion of men who had been in military service more than a year; with thousands of recruits who were still to learn the feel of a rifle against the shoulder; with remarkable solidarity and high morale; representing every class of the New England social order; every man a volunteer; every unit backed solidly by the personal interest of its community; with a very large number of skilled mechanics and office men in the ranks, it is not too much to say that the force in being, whatever its limitations of training, was one which afforded great promise of development into a representative combat unit of the highest type.

CHAPTER II

ORGANIZING THE DIVISION

LET us trace the successive steps of the process by which these soldiers were brought together into an organization. Weeks were to pass before they were fused and welded and shaped into a finished machine; months were required to effect the magical change from a machine to a living organism with a soul and a character all its own. For the moment, during the anxious days of the summer, the men and officers were assembled, counted, and tested, as if they were so many elements intended for the melting furnace and the mould.

Toward the end of July, withdrawn from guard duty, the troops were concentrated in the state camps of mobilization and training, or in other camps erected for the purpose.[1] Intensive battle training commenced at once. Parades and reviews fostered soldierly pride and smartness; incessant drill was held in close and extended order, with detailed instruction in camp and personal hygiene, first-aid methods, and care of equipment, together with considerable target practice for the riflemen. There were applied to all ranks a series of most searching tests, with purpose to insure a force as physically fit as possible. Other boards of medical officers examined for weaknesses of heart and lungs; venereal inspections were made weekly; slight physical deficiencies, which were no bar to service on a peace-time basis, now sufficed to discharge or transfer a man immediately. Severe, too, were the examinations of all officers' capacity. The whole effort was in the direction of weeding out the incompetent, the dead wood, the man who did not appear capable of pulling his weight. Unfair rejections were made; but they were inevitable under the conditions. And the net result was to include in the new Division only those who were unquestionably able to endure the strain of field service, judged from the angle of physical condition.

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[1] Units were assembled as follows: In Boston, Massachusetts, Headquarters Twenty-Sixth Division, Headquarters Troop, 101st Engineers, 101st Field Signal Battalion, at Framingham, Massachusetts, Headquarters 51st Infantry Brigade, 101st Infantry, 102d Machine-Gun Battalion; at Boxford, Massachusetts, Headquarters 51st Field Artillery Brigade, 51st Field Artillery Brigade complete; at Westfield, Massachusetts, Headquarters 52d Infantry Brigade, 52d Infantry Brigade complete; 101st Ammunition Train; at New Haven, Connecticut, 102d Infantry; at Niantic, Connecticut, 101st Machine-Gun Battalion; at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, 103d Machine-Gun Battalion.

Those officers and men of the New England National Guard who were not included in the Division at the time of its organization, or were subsequently transferred from it, were grouped together in a Depot Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General E. L. Sweetser, of Massachusetts.[1] To the skeleton regiments of this organization were sent many whom it was desired to retain in the service, even though they could not be numbered with the Twenty-Sixth. Reorganized later, after concentration in southern camps, into corps and army troops, a large proportion of these units found their way overseas as pioneer regiments and special service units; their original disappointment was largely compensated by the fine service they rendered to the common cause in other ways.

It was a period of the greatest nervous tension. Just what was in store, even a day ahead, nobody knew. When would the state troops be finally organized into a division? When would the command of the new units be announced? Who would be left behind? Would proper equipment be forthcoming? That comprised one set of thoughts; and the other could be summed up in the question cried by every unit of the American Expeditionary Force when compelled to remain more than forty-eight hours in one place: "When do we go?"

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[1] Under G.O. No. 3, Headquarters Twenty-Sixth Division, August 30, 1917, the Depot Brigade was created and the following units assigned to it: 1st N.H. Infantry (35 officers, 596 men); 1st Vt. Infantry (29 officers, 284 men); 5th Mass. Infantry (37 officers, 503 men); 6th Mass. Infantry (18 officers, 360 men); 8th Mass. Infantry (28 officers, 406 men); 1st Conn. Infantry (20 officers, 365 men); 1st Maine Heavy Artillery (40 officers, 776 men); Co. B, N.H. F.S. Troops (3 officers, 62 men); Co. A, Conn. F.S. Troops (3 officers, 64 men); 1st Separate Co., Conn. Infantry (1 officer, 109 men); 1st Separate Co., Mass. Infantry (3 officers, 149 men).

On August 5 the troops were drafted into the service of the United States. Already they had been mustered into it as organizations, immediately upon response to the call of the President on and after March 20. But the drafting process changed the soldier's status considerably. He was now individually in the United States Army, instead of being a member of a state organization temporarily in federal service. His allegiance was pledged to the Nation; his pay, subsistence, and control were now regulated wholly by the War Department. His collar ornament was a bronze "U.S." in place of the familiar abbreviation of his State's name. The "U.S." of the officers was surcharged with the initials "N.G." (National Guard), for the purpose of differentiating, in outward signs at least, the non-professional soldier from his Regular brother. Later, a single device was prescribed for all officers, whatever their military antecedents; but numbers of old National Guard officers had come by that time to feel a quaint pride in retaining the badges which proclaimed their non-professional origin.

The exact strength in men, animals, and material of a combat division was still a matter which the authorities were working out in detail. They had enjoyed the advantage of the advice of French and British experts, and the opinions of the staff officers sent overseas as observers earlier in the year; but, even so, there were many difficulties to be settled before a scheme could be elaborated for an American divisional organization suitable for trench warfare (the war of position), yet easily adaptable for the needs of the warfare of movement. The secret Tables of Organization of August, 1917, were marked "Provisional."

Radical indeed were the changes. One saw, for instance, the infantry regiment expanded from a war strength of 2061 to about 3600 all ranks; its machine-gun equipment was increased from four guns to sixteen; its traditional rifle was supplemented by light mortars, rifle and hand grenades, one-pounder field pieces (37-millimeter quick-firers), and automatic rifles. The supply, ammunition, and engineer trains were to operate a veritable fleet of trucks. The machine-gun strength of the division, excluding that of the infantry regiments, now included ten companies, each of 175 men and 16 guns, grouped into three battalions. Changes in the artillery were also far-reaching, due to the abandonment of the American guns, light or heavy, and the adoption of the French (the 75-millimeter field piece for two regiments, the 155-millimeter howitzer for one regiment). A battery of trench mortars was another novel divisional unit. More than one old-timer, after he had read down the page, breathed a sigh of relief on discovering that the authorities had found no substitute for the escort wagon and the army mule, without which, he believed, no truly American fighting force could legally be substituted.

Into this force were to be consolidated the infantry, cavalry, artillery, and machine-gun units of the state troops. The task would appear to have been difficult. For not only was the numerical strength of each unit a factor in the problem, but its record of efficiency, geographical location, and kind of training, had also to be considered in determining which regiments should constitute basic units, intact, and which should be broken up to complete the new organizations. But actually the tentative plans drawn by the Militia Bureau were found easy of application; and, with only such slight modifications as the conditions of the moment necessitated, they were immediately put in execution. Telegraphic instructions of the War Department, dated August 13, gave the necessary authority and impetus, and organization of the Twenty-

Sixth Division "from units of the New England National Guard" proceeded forthwith. As leader of what was soon to be called the "Yankee Division," there was designated Major-General Clarence R. Edwards, at the time Commanding General of the Northeastern Department.[1] On August 22, by General Orders Numbers One and Two, under which the newly appointed leader assumed command and announced his Staff,[2] together with the composition of the new units, there was inaugurated that relationship between the General and his troops which, from the very beginning, was destined, as time went on, to take on a character far wider and deeper than the merely official. The make-up of the individual organizations of the Division is shown by the accompanying table:

Unit and Commander	*Composition*
Headquarters Troop Captain Oliver Wolcott	Troop B. Mass. Cavalry.
51st Infantry Brigade Hdqrs. Brig.-Gen. Peter E. Traub	
101st Infantry Colonel Edward L. Logan	9th Mass. Infantry; 1400 enlisted men, 5th Mass. Infantry; 175 enlisted men, 6th Mass. Infantry.
102d Infantry Colonel Ernest L. Isbell	2d Conn. Infantry; 35 officers, 1582 enlisted men, 1st Conn. Infantry; 100 enlisted men, 6th Mass. Infantry; 50 enlisted men, 1st Vt. Infantry.

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[1] Assigned by G.O. 38, W.D., April 2, 1917.

[2] The staff included the following officers at first: Aide-de-camp — Captain John W. Hyatt, Infantry; Aide-de-camp — Lieutenant N. S. Simpkins, 101st Field Artillery; Chief of Staff — Lieutenant-Colonel George H. Shelton, General Staff; Assistant Chief of Staff — Major A. A. Maybach, General Staff; Adjutant — Lieutenant-Colonel George S. Simonds, Infantry, National Army; Inspector — Lieutenant-Colonel Horace P. Hobbs, Infantry, National Army; Quartermaster — Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph W. Beacham, Jr., Infantry, National Army; Surgeon — Lieutenant-Colonel James L. Bevans, Medical Corps; Judge Advocate — Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Dowell; Ordnance Officer — Major E. E. Phillips; Signal Officer — Major H. G. Chase, Signal Corps (Massachusetts); Chief of Artillery — Brigadier-General W. Lassiter, Field Artillery, National Army; Chief of Engineers — Colonel George W. Bunnell, Engineering Corps (Massachusetts).

Unit and Commander	*Composition*
52d Infantry Brigade Hdqrs. Brig.-Gen. Charles H. Cole	
103d Infantry Colonel Frank M. Hume	2d Maine Infantry; 1630 enlisted men, 1st N.H. Infantry; detachments from Cos. F, H, K, M, 8th Mass. Infantry.
104th Infantry Colonel William C. Hayes	2d Mass. Infantry; 12 officers, 800 enlisted men, 6th Mass. Infantry; 12 officers, 800 enlisted men, 8th Mass. Infantry; detachments Cos. F, H, K, M, 8th Mass. Infantry.
51st F.A. Brigade Hdqrs. Brig.-Gen. W. Lassiter	
101st Field Artillery Colonel John H. Sherburne	1st Mass. Field Artillery; 180 enlisted men, New England Coast Artillery.
102d Field Artillery Colonel Morris E. Locke	2d Mass. Field Artillery; 150 enlisted men, New England Coast Artillery.
103d Field Artillery Colonel Emery T. Smith	Battery A, N.H. Field Artillery; 3 Batteries R.I. Field Artillery; 2 Batteries Conn. Field Artillery; Troop M, R.I. Cavalry; detachment New England Coast Artillery.
101st Machine-Gun Battalion Major James L. Howard	Squadron Conn. Cavalry; 196 enlisted men, 1st Vt. Infantry.
102d Machine-Gun Battalion Major John Perrins, Jr.	Squadron Mass. Cavalry, less Troop B; 3 officers, 213 enlisted men, 1st Vt. Infantry.
103d Machine-Gun Battalion Major W. G. Gatchell	Squadron R.I. Cavalry, less Troops B and M; N.H. Machine-Gun Troop; detachment 1st Vt. Infantry.
101st Trench Mortar Battery Captain Roger A. Greene	Detachment 1st Maine Heavy Field Artillery.
101st Engineers Colonel George W. Bunnell	1st Mass. Engineers; 100 enlisted men, 1st Maine Heavy Field Artillery; 479 enlisted men, New England Coast Artillery.
101st Field Signal Battalion Major Harry G. Chase	1st Mass. Field Signal Battalion.
101st Train Headquarters and Military Police Colonel Warren M. Sweetser	326 enlisted men, 6th Mass. Infantry.

Unit and Commander	*Composition*
101st Ammunition Train Lieut.-Col. William J. Keville	13 officers, 700 enlisted men, 1st Vt. Infantry; 6 officers, 234 enlisted men, Mass. Coast Artillery.
101st Supply Train Captain Davis G. Arnold	Troop B, R.I. Cavalry; 5 officers, 359 enlisted men, 8th Mass. Infantry; 62 enlisted men, Co. M. 6th Mass. Infantry.
101st Engineer Train 1st Lieut. S. R. Waller	82 enlisted men, 6th Mass. Infantry.
101st Sanitary Train Lt.-Col. J. L. Bevans, M.C	1st, 2d Mass. Ambulance Cos. 1st, 2d Mass. Field Hospitals; 1st Conn. Ambulance Co.; 1st Conn. Field Hospital; 1st R.I. Ambulance Co.; 1st N.H. Field Hospital.

Minor changes in some of the transfers took place — indeed, they were still in progress while the units were under orders to proceed to the embarkation port; additions both of officers and men were made as needed; but deviations from the above table were inconsiderable. The composite nature of the divisional units is interesting. Every State in New England was represented; many of the units included troops from localities widely separated. Sorrow there was in the state regiments which were broken up to fill in the numerical strength of the fortunate ones which had been retained intact; there was required both tact and generosity on the part of all groups thus thrown together before the first jealousies and inevitable heartburnings were quenched in a new spirit of service. But it is a fact well worth recording that, in a time far shorter than was expected, the old resentments, the ancient local rivalries, began to be forgotten; the new division went overseas not as a loose aggregation, but a closely welded whole.

What of the men who had been chosen by higher authority to lead the Twenty-Sixth in battle? So much of the history of any organization is intimately bound up with the personality of its leaders, so curiously close, in the case of the Twenty-Sixth Division, was the connection between the character of any single unit and that of its commander, that no record of the Division's origins and organization would be complete that omitted a somewhat detailed reference to the principal officers of the staff and the line.

The assignment of Major-General Edwards to command insured that the new organization would benefit by the leadership of a Regular officer of long and varied experience, both in administrative, staff, and line branches. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1860, he was graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1883. With his promotion to a captaincy in the Regular service in 1898, large responsibilities and rapid advancement fell to his lot. As Major (Assistant Adjutant-General) and Lieutenant-Colonel of Volunteers (47th Infantry), from 1899 to 1901, he performed duty as Adjutant-General to General Lawton in active field service in the Philippine Islands, whither, in 1905, he accompanied Secretary of War William H. Taft on the occasion of the latter's famous journey. Appointed Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs in 1902 he was promoted to the grade of Brigadier-General in 1906; he was transferred to the line in 1912, and commanded brigades on the Mexican Border (6th Brigade, Second Division) and in Hawaii (1st Hawaiian Brigade), until sent to the command of American troops in the Panama Canal Zone in 1915. From this duty he was transferred (on April 2, 1917) to the command of the newly created Northeastern Department, with Headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts, in April, 1917, and attained the rank of Major-General in August of the same year. Thirty-four years of active and varied service, in all grades, meant that the new division commander was intimately acquainted with army men and methods, had been trained in accordance with army traditions, and shared the honorable ideals of duty with which the Regular establishment has always been credited. Beyond the lot of the vast majority of army officers, however, General Edwards had been fortunate in possessing a wide knowledge of men and events outside the army horizon; the bars which his life and duty, under our system, erect inevitably between the average Regular Officer and other classes in the American democracy, sharply limiting his experience and tending unhappily to segregate him from contact with the thought of his generation, were, in the case of General Edwards, early broken down. He enjoyed personal contact with men of many classes; from his varied activities he had become one of the most prominent figures of the army then in the public eye. From the day of his assumption of the duties of Department Commander, in Boston, his immediate hold on the imagination and esteem of the people at large was as marked as was the energy of his administration. His choice, as leader of the New England Division, was felicitous indeed, considering the excellent effect the selection would have on the public from whose sons the Twenty-Sixth was recruited.

As Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel (later Brigadier-General) George H. Shelton brought to his duties twenty years of experience as an infantry officer of the Regular Army, the advantage of Connecticut birth and parentage, and the prestige of his position as a member for two years (1906–08) of the General Staff of the Army. In military circles he had won a wide reputation for fearless expression of opinion and progressiveness through his editorship of the "Infantry Journal," perhaps the most influential of the various service magazines. Throughout the whole course of the Division's history, in which he served in various capacities, no officer carried away a more perfect record for steely efficiency, broad human-kindness, and those qualities of humor, sympathy, and force (combined so rarely) which go to make up an ideal leader of troops in the field.

The military record of the infantry brigade commanders, Brigadier-Generals Peter E. Traub (51st Infantry Brigade) and Charles H. Cole (52d Infantry Brigade), presented a most interesting contrast. On the one side, General Traub was a Regular of the Regulars, in education, experience, and point of view. Graduated from West Point in 1886 into the cavalry arm, he became a Major in 1911, and in 1914 Assistant Chief of Philippine Constabulary with rank of Colonel. A colonelcy in the Regular Army came in 1916; on August 5, 1917, he became a Brigadier in the National Army. For several years following 1904, he was professor of languages at West Point and in the Army Signal School; his duty with troops as a young officer of cavalry had gained him experience in Indian fighting. A man of indomitable energy and a keen student of warfare, General Traub proved a great strength to the Division through the early period of training in France, gaining the confidence of all those under his command.

Similar natural qualities of leadership — such as energy, inspiration, devotion to duty, and resourcefulness — were possessed by General Cole; but his military training had been received wholly in the service of his State (Massachusetts). An enlisted man and officer of the First Corps Cadets between 1890 and 1910 (Major of the battalion in the latter year), he was appointed Adjutant-General of the State of Massachusetts in 1914, retiring as Brigadier-General in 1916; he served for several years, also, as a member of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice. All precedents to the contrary, General Cole vividly exemplified the fact that it is possible for an active politician to be a good soldier. He brought to his new duties in the Division a long experience in handling men, and the utmost energy in the performance of his work, coupled with a patriotism as ardent as it was sustained. At the time of the entry of the United States into the war, he was out of the service; but he promptly enlisted as a private in Headquarters Company, 9th Massachusetts Infantry, and presently, because of long previous service, knowledge of conditions, and established reputation as an organizer and administrator, he was rapidly advanced to the rank of Brigadier-General in the state forces, with command of a brigade. Considered invaluable in any National Guard organization, as representing its best traditions, he was retained in his high rank by the War Department and given the command of a brigade of infantry in the new division. This, be it said, was contrary to the prevailing custom of the War Department, which relegated most of the state general officers to command of units not taken overseas, their place being taken by officers of the Regular establishment.[1]

The command of the 51st Field Artillery Brigade went to Brigadier-General William Lassiter, an acknowledged artillery expert of distinction, who brought to his branch of the Division's forces the very highest professional standards, and who remained long enough with the brigade to impress it with abiding ideals of efficiency. At the time of his assignment to the Division, General Lassiter was performing duty as military attaché at the United States Embassy in London.[2]

Of the nine regimental commanders (four of infantry; three of artillery; one of engineers; one of the trains and military police), the majority were officers of the Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut National Guard. Colonel George W. Bunnell, 101st Engineers, had had the benefit of a West Point education; others had been long identified with state troops and with their own units, serving in all grades. Chosen from all the regimental commanders in the New England Guard, they represented, in the judgment of the War Department, the best material available for the positions they occupied. For, apart from their military experience, there existed another set of considerations respecting the fitness of these regimental commanders to take their men overseas, which not only possessed considerable interest, from various points of view, at the time of their selection, but was also to play a part, later, in determining the value of certain regiments as fighting units. In a peculiar sense the regimental commanders were looked upon by the thousands of good men and women whose boys were with the troops as the guardians and friends of those lads as well as their leaders in battle. In every case they were daily subjected to a very heavy and continual pressure, in the form of direct personal appeals, from their own intimate friends, from men of high position and influence, as well as from pathetic hundreds of anxious, proud fathers and mothers, "to look out for my boy," "to bring Joe home safe," "to see that he behaves himself," "to give Bill a chance," and so on. Whether they so willed or not, these colonels of local, territorial regiments were made to occupy a place in which they were compelled to carry the weight of a feeling of personal responsibility, not only for the military training, good discipline, physical condition, and fighting edge of their regiments, but also for the happiness and safety of hundreds of the individuals composing them. They were forced, moreover, by conditions to assume a position of responsibility to the community which was the home of their respective regiments, for their commands' creditable behavior and honorable achievement. A colonel was told, directly and emphatically, that he was expected to bring glory and renown to his home town; he was reminded of the competition he would meet; he was showered with gifts to be held by him in trust for "the boys" — gifts in the shape of funds presented by veteran members of the organization or other groups of friends, reaching to very large amounts; he was importuned by relief and patriotic societies, chambers of commerce, and scores of individuals, to express a wish for any conceivable article for the men's comfort or happiness, so that it might be provided at once. Encouraged, flattered, strengthened, heartened by the most prodigal expressions of devotion, actively supported in his work by the confidence of thousands of people in his own home town, the regimental commander was made to feel, at the same time, that he could not afford to let matters go wrong with his organization, if he cared for his future; that he had a very real duty toward the parents and friends of the lads over whom he exercised control. On the face of it, the colonelcy of these community regiments afforded a great temptation in the direction of business, social, or political preferment. It is reasonable to suppose that a certain pressure was exercised to award these colonelcies to officers of the Regular Army, who, because of their training and purely professional attitude, would not be, people assumed, influenced by conditions tending to impair the value of the National Guard commanders. But as the debate proceeded, the question was decided in favor of the officers already in charge. The appointments were made; the Division was committed at the start to a character bearing birthmarks of its strictly community origin. For better, for worse, it was to be a militia organization. And such, through all the vicissitudes of its history, it remained; as such it must be always judged, with what verdict it will be interesting to discover.

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[1] Another case of an officer's resigning high command in his state troops, merely for the sake of taking an active part in service overseas, was that of Brigadier-General Albert Greenlaw, of Maine. At the very outset, when the Maine troops were called into service, he resigned as Adjutant-General, to accept appointment as Captain and Supply Officer of a Maine infantry regiment (later 103d Infantry), going abroad in that capacity, and later being promoted to the Division Staff (General Staff Section, G–1).

[2] Colonel M. E. Locke was in command of 51st F.A. Brigade for some time after arrival in France. General Lassiter joined at Coetquidan, upon terminating his duty as military attaché.

CHAPTER III

OVERSEAS

FEVERISHLY active were the times to follow. The new Division Staff was hard-pressed.[1] The question of enlisted or commissioned strength would be paramount one day, only to be jostled aside by demands for equipment and clothing. Now field inspections must be held; transfers and discharges must be expedited; training schedules must be prepared. The desire animated all ranks to be first overseas. There was eager speculation as to the progress in preparation for service of the Forty-Second ("Rainbow") Division, then mobilizing on Long Island, New York, and quite publicly heralded as destined to be the first division of the citizen-army to go abroad. To obtain equipment and clothing, every agency was called on, from state authorities to private individuals, from government arsenals to manufacturers' stocks — the work proceeding on the basis that all artillery, machine-gun, and other ordnance material of special application, together with motor transport, animals, and much of the required quartermaster property, would be issued on arrival in France. In the matter of numerical strength, when it was found that discharges and transfers to the Depot Brigade were going to reduce it, for certain units, below what was prescribed, recourse was had to such other troops as were available in New England. From the New England Coast Artillery (National Guard in federal service), some hundreds were transferred into places where they were most needed;[1] of the newly drafted men of the Seventy-

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[1] At various dates subsequent to the organization of the Division and prior to departure overseas, the following officers were added to the Staff in special orders: *Assistants to Division Surgeon,* Captain J. Glass, M.C., Captain K. B. Bailey, M.C., Lieutenant-Colonel F. P. Williams, M.C.; *Assistants to Division Quartermaster,* Major G. E. Cole, Captain C. E. Scorer, Captain O. G. Lagerquist, Captain E. H. Tandy, Captain H. H. Wheelock; *Assistant to Division Inspector,* Major R. P. Harbold; *Assistants to Division Adjutant,* Major L. W. Cass, Major C. A. Stevens; *Division Ordnance Officer,* Major E. T. Weisel; *Assistant Ordnance Officer,* Captain Aiken Simons; *Aide-de-camp,* Captain A. L. Pendleton, Jr.; *Interpreter,* Lieutenant J. P. King.

Of these officers a large majority remained with the Division throughout its period of service abroad, a fact which contributed vastly to the smooth running of the staff machinery. Friendship and mutual understanding, together with devotion to the common cause of serving the troops, accomplished more than any set of staff regulations. While frequent changes in the personnel of the General Staff sections sometimes affected temporarily their effectiveness, the Quartermaster, Adjutant's, Ordnance, and Medical Staffs made continuous and notable records for helpful service of the Division, from beginning to end.

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[1] The following telegram from the Adjutant-General and the reply of the Division Commander illustrate the necessarily summary methods employed, and the local conditions contended against, in the organization of the Division:

(*a*) "Washington, D.C., Aug. 30. Maj.-Gen. C. R. Edwards, U.S. Army, Boston, Mass. Secretary of War directs that neither Regular Coast Artillery nor Coast Artillery of the National Guard in service of United States shall, without special permission from the War Department in each case, be considered as available for use in organization of new mobile army units of National Guard and National Army for service abroad. McCain." (*b*) "Aug. 31, 1917. Adjutant-General, Washington, D.C. Number 115. Reference your telegram August 30th directing that no Coast Artillery be considered available for use in reorganization of National Guard without special permission of War Department. I report that in the reorganization of the 26th Division I transferred from the National Guard Coast Artillery of this Department the following personnel: To the 51st Field Artillery Brigade, 9 officers and 846 enlisted men; to the 101st Engineers, 3 officers and 379 men; to the 101st Ammunition Train, 7 officers and 234 men, in all a total of 19 officers and 1459 enlisted men. This personnel has been absorbed into the new organizations and equipped, and the organizations are ready for service. Under my orders for the reorganization of the 26th Division . . . the necessity of hastening the reorganization and utilizing everything of the National Guard available here for the purpose appeared paramount and authorized. It was impossible to complete the organization of the units named above from the personnel available in this Division without using some of the Coast Artillery. I used no more than was absolutely necessary and used these only after consultation with the District Artillery commanders who stated that these troops could be spared and that those selected desired the transfer. . . . Furthermore, as precedents for my action, the use of Coast Artillery in the organization of the trench mortar battery was in the plan of reorganization suggested to me by the Militia Bureau and handed to Colonel Shelton before he left Washington; and my earlier instructions, when it was contemplated to use New England units in the organization of the composite 42d Division, directed me to furnish the Headquarters Train and Military Police for that Division from the New England Coast Artillery. I request, therefore, that my action in this respect be approved. To transfer these men back now to the Coast Artillery would interfere seriously with the organization and efficiency of my command, and create dissatisfaction among all concerned. Notwithstanding the few popular and political protests that have been made against the reorganization effected by me, I have been able to pre-

Sixth Division, then assembling at Camp Devens, Massachusetts, somewhat less than 1000 enlisted men were utilized, at the last moment, as replacements in the infantry. From the Officers' Reserve Corps were drawn about 179 lieutenants, who were distributed to units of all arms.

It was commonly rumored that, following the Division Commander's notification that organization had been effected, the Division would be sent to Camp Greene, North Carolina, for training. Indeed, the arrangements for that movement progressed so far that a detail of enlisted men was sent to Camp Greene to prepare a Division Headquarters; and up to the very last this impression was allowed to prevail.

Over the preparations for actual departure overseas was hung a thick curtain of mystery. Such secrets as possible sailing dates, destinations, or possible routes, precious for the enemy to ascertain, were carefully guarded. The censorship regarding news of war preparations, self-imposed by the New England press, was honorably observed; the news which every village in the region was most anxious to hear was never published. The departure of a unit, when it did occur, was unheralded and unattended. A battalion would be at drill of an afternoon; the next morning would find its camp empty and the troops vanished, nobody of the general public knew whither, and of those in the secret nobody would tell. But one by one the regiments and trains began to disappear, early in September. Their animal transport was packed off, under cover of darkness, to Newport News. Their equipment and baggage were slightly different from those to which they had been used, for the wall and pyramidal tents, the mosquito bars, and the cotton uniforms, long familiar to veterans of American camps

serve generally an excellent spirit, and to develop, both within and without the Division, a willingness to make the sacrifice of pride and tradition involved by the reorganization. The use of some Coast Artillery has helped largely to obtain this result. To change the accomplished fact now would, I fear, react upon us and arouse new opposition to the reorganization. EDWARDS."

and campaigns, were left behind. Artillery and machine-gun material had long before been turned in. There was a great shortage of rifles, packs, carriers, pistols, and mess equipment, but such an abundance of articles provided by the relief agencies, from safety razors to knitted helmets, that not till months later was the balance between field kit and comfort kit contemplated by regulations even partially restored.

The movement of the troops to the ports of embarkation at Hoboken and Montreal was regulated by a twofold consideration — available tonnage and readiness of the units. From the moment of organization it had been the naturally ardent desire that the Twenty-Sixth should be the first complete American Division overseas. The prospect of having to undergo a long wait at a southern camp was not alluring; it made a far less insistent call on patriotism than did immediate service abroad. Local pride was touched to the quick by reports of the readiness of the Forty-Second Division; it spurred to the very greatest efforts all persons, military and civilian, on whom fell the duties of organizing and equipping the various units. As a result of ceaseless labor this task was accomplished by the first of September; but the successful issue of the enterprise — the actual embarkation of the troops — was only accomplished after the expenditure of an equal amount of effort and ingenuity. While the initiative of the Division Commander accomplished much, credit for the Division's winning the final lap of the race with its generous rival and friend the Forty-Second, was largely due to Captain A. L. Pendleton, of the Division Commander's personal staff. Assigned to the task of securing the first available transportation for the Division, this officer never rested till he accomplished his difficult mission. Upon information on a certain date that four ships would be available within the next four days, and that the units for whom they were destined were not ready, it was less than an hour after Captain Pendleton wired the news to Division Headquarters before the Chief of Staff replied with the list of assignments, and the start was made. Because of priority schedules, however, which exactly prescribed the order in which all the American troops were to be embarked, there was a reluctance on the part of the shipping officers to allot to the Twenty-Sixth all the tonnage as it became available; but nothing was left undone to insure that the Division should have every chance. Again a list of ships available in the near future, with their passenger and cargo space, came into the hands of the indefatigable Pendleton, who promptly prepared complete embarkation assignments of troop units from the Division, showing how they could be shipped with most economy and least delay. This he placed in the hands of the embarkation authorities with such good results that, when this next convoy was assembled, and the units officially scheduled to take it were again reported as not ready to go abroad, the units of the Twenty-Sixth once more received the preference, both at the port of Hoboken, New Jersey, and at Montreal, from which latter port, by arrangement with the Canadian Government, American troops also sailed. In convoys (usually collected at Halifax), or by single steamers, in ships of all sorts from first-class Atlantic liners like the Adriatic, Celtic, or Saxonia, down to hastily impressed coastwise fruit boats, the troops made the journey. Civilian passengers, in many cases, were on the same ship with the troops; the service of transport, afterwards so perfected through experience, was still in embryo. But whatever the minor discomforts or occasional hardships of the voyage, happiness reigned in every heart, for at length the Division was on its way to the Great Adventure. And complacency was added when presently it became known that of all the combat forces in the United States, Regulars, National Guard, or National Army, the Twenty-Sixth Division was the first to be organized, fitted out, and sent abroad as a division. It is true that the splendid First Division had preceded it by some weeks, but this was lacking in many of its prescribed units, and it went in detachments. Other troops also, such as some Marine, engineer, or quartermaster detachments, and the 14th Railway Engineers, were also on the other side by September 1, engaged in organizing, policing, and construction work around the base ports, travel routes, and principal headquarters.[1] But of the citizen-army's combat divisions, the Twenty-Sixth had unquestionably the good fortune to be the first ready and the first across the water. It even preceded all combat troops of the Regular Army, but the units named above.[2]

[1] The first American unit landed in France on June 25, 1917.

[2] The sailing and arrival list is here appended: An advance party of 17 officers sailed from New York August 25, and arrived at Liverpool September 15:

	Unit	*Departed from U.S.*	*Arrived*
1.	51st Inf. Brig. Hdqrs.	September 7, 1917	September 21, 1917
2.	101st Infantry	September 7	September 21
3.	101st Ambulance Co.	September 7	September 20
4.	101st Field Hospital	September 7	September 20
5.	101st Field Artillery	September 9	September 23
6.	103d Ambulance Co.	September 16	October 2
7.	103d Field Hospital	September 16	October 2
8.	102d Infantry	September 19	October 9
9.	104th Field Hospital	September 22	October 7
10.	51st F.A. Brig. Hdqrs.	September 23	October 5
11.	102d Field Artillery	September 23	October 5
12.	101st Signal Battalion	September 23	October 5
13.	102d Machine-Gun Btn.	September 23	October 5
14.	103d Infantry	September 25	October 17
15.	101st Supply Train	September 25	October 9
16.	101st Engineers	September 26	October 9
17.	102d Ambulance Co.	September 26	October 17
18.	104th Ambulance Co.	September 26	October 17
19.	52d Inf. Brig. Hdqrs.	September 27	October 17
20.	104th Infantry	September 27	October 10
21.	101st Ammunition Train	October 3	October 17
22.	103d Machine-Gun Btn.	October 3	October 17
23.	102d Field Hospital	October 4	October 17
24.	Division Headquarters	October 9	October 23
25.	Headquarters Troop	October 9	October 23
26.	101st Machine-Gun Btn.	October 9	October 23
27.	101st Tn. Hq. and Military Police	October 9	October 24
28.	103d Field Artillery	October 9	October 23
29.	101st Trench Mortar	October 9	October 23

The only untoward incident of the movement of the Division overseas was that occurring on the voyage of the 2d Battalion, 102d Infantry. And this is worth recording only as illustrating the remarkable good fortune attending the convoys, at a time when German submarine activity was very marked and provisions for the protection of troops on Atlantic passages not yet perfected. Embarked September 23 on S.S. Lenape, the troops had accomplished some three hundred miles of the voyage, when the breaking of a piston pinion, during rough weather, compelled the return of the ship to New York for repairs. Until October 27, the battalion encamped at Fort Totten, New York, on which date it sailed on S.S. Adriatic, in convoy, arriving at Liverpool November 9.

From the incidents of the voyages of the several regiments, battalions, and other units, of their arrival on foreign soil, and of their transportation to ultimate destinations, one impression was outstanding in the minds of officers and men alike. Plain to see it was, that any division was no more than a cog in the huge war-machine. A week before embarkation an infantry regiment had seemed an enormous body of troops; to visualize a new division of 27,000 all ranks was difficult even for the active imagination; a division commander appeared as remote and all-powerful as a demigod. But the jaws of the great troop-movement machinery closed on the Twenty-Sixth, and the Division wilted. Strange British and French staff officers, who represented hitherto unheard-of powers, with an efficiency all their own, and irritating because its methods were not at first understood, laid firm hands on stoutly protesting colonels and the puzzled, weary little staffs of the brigade and division commanders, directing this and that, insisting on the other, in a manner which made all ranks aware that their beloved organization was no more than a trifling pawn on a gigantic chessboard. For a while the Division did not function as such at all. Battalions moved separately, oftentimes; a regimental commander was at no time sure of the location of his units. The experience of one Regimental Headquarters, which crossed the ocean with one battalion of the regiment, the supply company, a strange company of army bakers, Canadian aviators, and civilians, nurses and little children, may be taken as fairly typical. From Montreal the troops proceeded to Halifax, where the ship lay at anchor for a week awaiting the rest of the convoy. The third battalion and the machine-gun company, be it said, had preceded Headquarters into the unknown by about a week; the second battalion was left behind in camp, to follow nobody knew when. At Liverpool, the ship was boarded by American staff officers, who informed the Colonel that they knew nothing, and had no authority beyond collecting the personnel records and passenger lists. Everything governing debarkation and transportation was in the hands of the British. The latter soon appeared, with explicit orders that the troops should entrain at once, without rations, without field ranges, without baggage of any description save what was in the men's packs. To leave his rations and baggage was something unheard of by the American Colonel; it promised infinity of discomfort for his men; there seemed only the most dubious guarantees that either would ever be forwarded or recovered. He made emphatic representations; but all to no purpose. Bewildered, deeply solicitous both for his men and for his own good impression on the British authorities, he felt swept along on an irresistible current. Unknown forces took him to Southampton; some remote power sent him and his men to a filthy camp of flimsy tentage and black, sticky mud, where the rain (for which the new arrivals were inclined to blame the British Staff) was endless for five days; nobody apparently had the authority to make the men comfortable; "it was always done that way, and quite all right." Here a pause was made while all-powerful, unseen hands prepared a ship to ferry the troops to La Havre across the Channel. One must wait; one must keep the men strictly in hand; one must not seek diligently to improve living conditions.

It was hard for commanding officers in those bleak, first days. They laid down the strictest orders to check any tendency to stray away sight-seeing; they were desperately anxious for their draggled men to be at all times smart, prompt, soldierly, creditable to their country; they were sick at heart over the wretched condition of the sodden, stinking camp; they were worried by the lads who overstayed their three-hour leaves, while sympathizing with the spirit of adventure and curiosity which led the youthful feet into byways of exploration. Cut off from all connection with home, perfectly ignorant of the whereabouts of other parts of the Division, not knowing a half-day ahead what was in store, they were truly unhappy. Whether at the Southampton camp, or the Oxney camp near Borden, in Saint-Nazaire, the La Havre rest camp, or marooned in the slums of Liverpool seeking baggage and equipage, the story was quite the same. But it was good medicine — that first bitter, salutary taste of inferiority and powerlessness. It gave our officers a great lesson in the direction of subordination to authority, in patience; they were taught to have confidence in those impersonal, higher powers, unseen and unknown, which, from an unguessed place at the end of a telegraph wire, were directing the destiny of the new arrivals behind the firing-line.

CHAPTER IV

SETTLING DOWN IN FRANCE

AFTER a very brief delay, in view of the depleted condition of the French railway rolling stock, the various units of the Division were moved to the two areas assigned for their training. That occupied by all elements except the artillery and ammunition train lay adjacent to the market town of Neufchâteau, along steep, wooded slopes and broad valleys, dotted with gray, stone villages.[1] It was in Lorraine. It was in the heart of ancient France. It was the stark, austere region which had cradled Joan of Arc — a land of meager, stony soil, under a sky of dullest gray. One wonders how many of the new arrivals — vigorous, active lads — were touched at all by the spell of the quaint old country. Surely to some of them — per-

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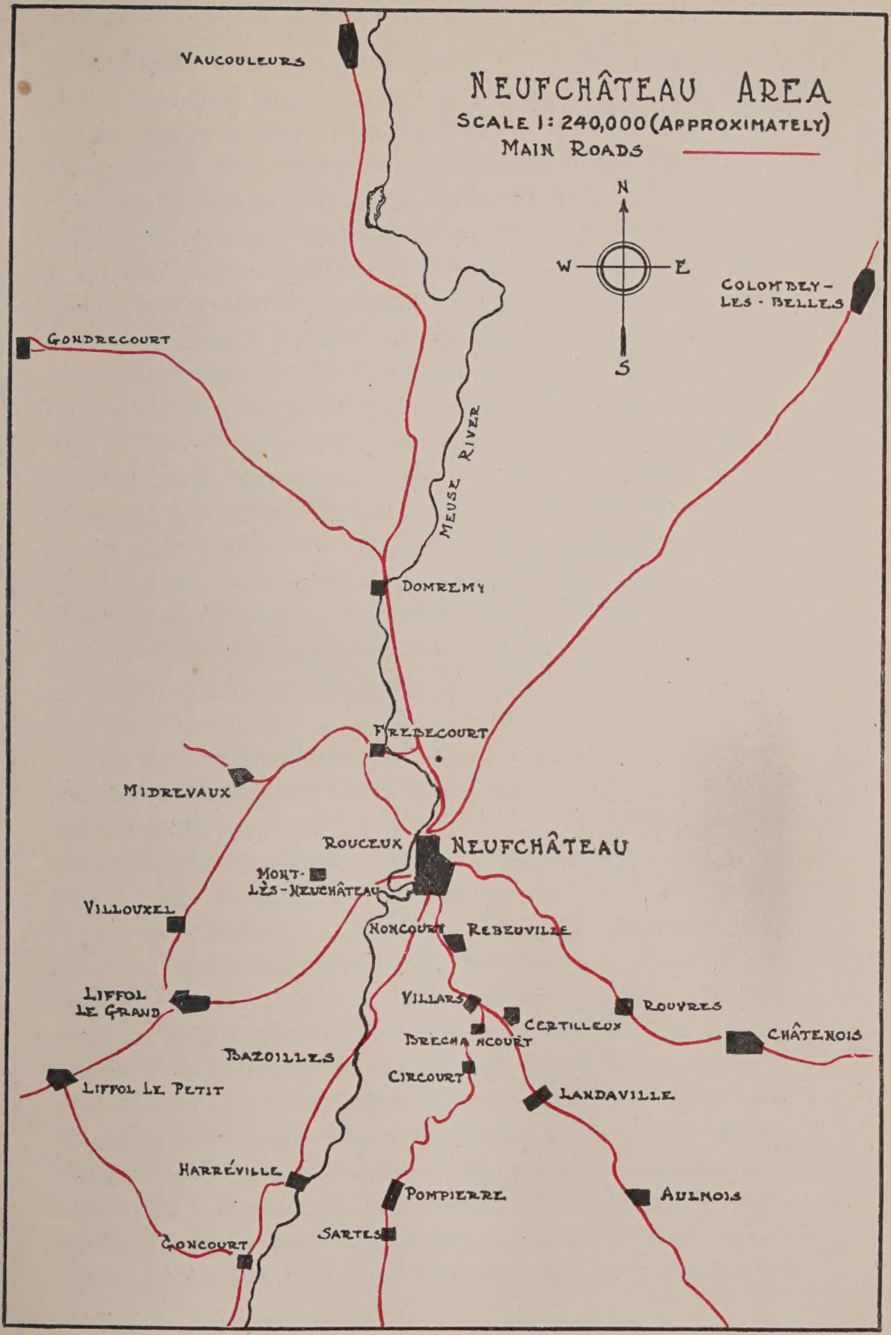
[1] Division Headquarters opened in Neufchâteau October 31. Units of the Division, less artillery and ammunition train, were billeted in the following villages:

51st Infantry Brig. Headquarters	Rebeuville
101st Infantry	Neufchâteau — Rouceux — Circourt — Villars — Brechaincourt — Rebeuville
102d Infantry	Landaville — Certilleux — Rouvres-le-Chetive
102d Machine-Gun Battalion	Rebeuville — Brechaincourt — Rouvres-le-Chetive
52d Infantry Brig. Headquarters	Liffol-le-Grand
103d Infantry	Liffol-le-Grand — Villouxel
104th Infantry	Harreville — Pompierre — Sartes — Chatenois — Giroucourt
103d Machine-Gun Battalion	Liffol-le-Grand — Sartes — Villouxel
101st Engineers	Rolampont — Bazoilles — Mont-les-Neufchâteau
Headquarters Trains and M.P.	Neufchâteau
101st Field Signal Battalion	Noncourt
101st Machine-Gun Battalion	Neufchâteau — Certilleux
101st Supply Train	Neufchâteau — Harreville
101st Sanitary Train	Neufchâteau — Bazoilles — Liffol-le-Grand
Railhead	Certilleux


NEUFCHÂTEAU AREA
SCALE 1: 240,000 (APPROXIMATELY)
MAIN ROADS
N
W
E
S
VAUCOULEURS
COLOMBEY-LES-BELLES
GONDRECOURT
MEUSE RIVER
DOMREMY
FREBECOURT
MIDREVAUX
ROUCEUX
NEUFCHÂTEAU
MONT-LÈS-NEUCHÂTEAU
VILLOUXEL
NONCOURT
REBEUVILLE
LIFFOL LE GRAND
VILLARS
CERTILLEUX
ROUVRES
CHÂTENOIS
BRECHAINCOURT
BAZOILLES
CIRCOURT
LIFFOL LE PETIT
LANDAVILLE
HARRÉVILLE
POMPIERRE
AULNOIS
SARTES
GONCOURT

haps to more than one would fancy — there was an appeal in the fact that they were preparing for war within sight of the village whence the Maid of Orleans rode away to war's adventures years before; that here the Roman legionary, Gothic raider, great Dukes of Burgundy, mighty Prince-Bishops of forgotten sees, all with their men-at-arms, had marched to battle. It was a land dull and dreary to the eye, but rich in tradition, populous with bygone figures of French history. In the days before the war the venerable towns in the American area, like Langres with its quaint dwellings and tortuous streets, induced the visitor and student to linger and return. But in the autumn of 1917 there was no time and little inclination to enjoy these centers of old French provincial life. Pressing problems weighed on every American commander, from highest to the least important, such as providing shelter, food, clothing, and arms for thousands of men. Imperative was the necessity of fitting them for battle in the shortest possible time, under conditions to chill the heart and tax one's greatest ingenuity.

The artillery brigade and the ammunition train were sent to a training area at Camp Coetquidan, in Brittany, not far from the French artillery center at Rennes, within easy reach of the famous school of equitation at Saumur. The Camp itself lay at the eastern end of the training area — a broad, even, treeless moor which stretched away for about three miles, dropped precipitously into a valley, and rose again into a series of wooded hills; a country singularly appropriate for range purposes, in that it gave almost every variety of target that would be likely to be met in actual warfare. Beside the moor, the valley, and the hills, there were also roads, farms, mills, and even two villages, long since abandoned, the prey of the practicing batteries. When the French were informed that American artillery was to use Coetquidan, their first move was to install some five thousand German prisoners along with their guard and a regiment of French engineers, in order to expand the camp into something like adequacy for American uses. It was at first designed for one brigade, but hardly had the 51st Brigade been installed when the first units of the 67th Brigade of the Forty-Second Division began to arrive, and thereafter there was never a time when there were not two brigades and toward the end three occupying the Camp. In large measure the problems confronting the gunners and men of the train were identical with those before the other troops of the Division; and they were solved in the same manner, by sheer grit and ingenuity. And since the work done by the Twenty-Sixth was typical of what was done, that first winter, by all American combat troops in France, it will be profitable to note its salient aspects in detail.

The task of the pioneer divisions of the Expeditionary Force was one of the most interesting, as well as difficult, which had ever fallen to American troops. To the First, Twenty-Sixth, Forty-Second, and Second Divisions, later grouped into the First Corps, there fell the good fortune to act as advance party of the army, which, in the months to follow, was to flow into all corners of France. On them lay the duty of creating that first impression of American troops in the minds of both the French military authorities and the civilian population. Here were two divisions of the Regular Army (including a Marine brigade) offered as representative of our professional soldiery, but whose traditions of efficiency and thorough military knowledge were hard to impress on the average onlooker because of thousands of recruits untouched by the Regular Army spirit, whose company officers included scores of lieutenants fresh from civilian training-camps. Here again were two divisions of the citizen-army. Their enlisted personnel averaged better than that of the Regular divisions; they included a good many Regular officers on their rosters, mainly in staff and higher line positions; but their battalion and company officers were entirely non-professional. In general, therefore, while persons well acquainted with the American soldier might note some differences between the four first divisions, their outward appearance, discipline, and the salient characteristics of both officers and men showed no distinguishing marks whatever to the stranger.

And just as the general impression they made was the same, practically, so all had the same tasks to do immediately on reaching France. What the Twenty-Sixth Division did in the way of training and work, and in making the French acquainted with Americans, was precisely that which was accomplished or attempted, neglected or perfected, by their very good friends and rivals, the First and the Forty-Second. And as the work progressed, as the divisions drank deep of the same cup of experience, old differences grew less evident; the common American traits grew more distinct, a certain fellowship commenced to show evidence of bloom, in place of that mutually sincere disparagement and jealousy, which had graced the attitude of the Regular and citizen soldier, for years before.

All accounts agree as to the general impression produced by our troops on the French civilians. Their advent was hailed with mingled feelings. Profoundly depressed in the autumn of 1917 by the only half-successful and fearfully costly efforts their armies had put forth in the spring and summer, wishing nothing so much as a quick conclusion of the national agony of sorrow, deprivation, and apparently futile effort, a large minority, seeing in the advent of the Americans only a promise of the war's prolongation, was much inclined to regret it. The propaganda of *défaitisme* — "Since we cannot win, why fight further?" — had gained many adherents. A people which clings devotedly to its household and lands, heartily weary of war, could only sigh at the prospect of the coming of more legions, however friendly, to occupy the land and use it as they saw fit.

The vast majority, on the contrary, welcomed the Americans as saviors. They looked on our men as crusaders, who had left their homes to fight for an ideal, as the force which was destined to cause the triumph of right and justice. The slow-moving, hard-fisted Lorraine peasant did not commit himself as to the wider aspects of the Americans' peaceful invasion. He was principally concerned over the broken windows and farm tools, the unceremonious cleaning of his filthy villages, the lamentable way in which his firewood was burned, the free-and-easy fashion in which the broad-backed lads from the West sprawled riotously over his house and stables, as they set up their housekeeping. He uttered shrill wails over impending ruin; but he stood ruin off by the comfortably large damages he collected for every goose feather, handful of hay, or inch of bark on a fruit-tree which he believed his sturdy lodgers had appropriated or destroyed. But his women-folk liked the Yankees well. They approved whole-heartedly of the manner in which they tossed about their money in the little shops and dark cafés. No attempt was made to understand the workings of the American soldier's mind; his irreverent, contentious, patient, hell-raising, self-confident, insatiably curious, oddly gentle nature was accepted as it was, with a mixture of immense admiration and reluctant dismay. "*Les Américains sont fous*" was the formula that summed up everything. They were so young and lusty, so buoyant, so amazingly impudent! Private Bill Jones was so careless about breaking or spoiling things — and paid for the damage so royally! Quarrelsome in his drink, none too mindful of even the strictest orders, he was sturdily patient in discomfort and hardship. He ate enormously. He was tremendously energetic and direct in getting a task done. The people among whom he came to live had seen their own dogged *poilus*, greedy Russians, the black Turcos, and weather-cock Italians — all war-weary. Small wonder that they smiled their friendship on these boyish, eager fellows, even if, in some hearts, there lurked a shadow of regret that their efforts and their youth were doomed, as cried the *défaitistes,* to be thrown away in a cause already lost.

The French military authorities observed the Division from another angle. And, observing, they were content. They could make soldiers out of material like this — assault troops, reckless, fierce, hardy. "A day will come," said one of the French instructors of the Twenty-Sixth, "when your men will forget that they ever were civilians. They will be *warriors!*" and his tone, his gesture, evoked a picture of such fighting men as followed Bonaparte or Marlborough. "To-day," said another critic of the Division's men, "your fellows appear an enthusiastic mob. But wait a little —!"

The programme and detailed schedules of training were prompt in making their appearance. Based on the assumption that the Division was to prepare for the warfare of position, but was to consider always the possibility that the dogged duel of the trenches must give place to open warfare, there was laid down by the training section of the General Staff the most carefully progressive scheme of instruction imaginable. It was characteristic of the ability and methods of the men who, at our own army's advanced schools, had absorbed the best of the accepted theories about warfare, had heard the advice of the best Allied commanders, and adapted what they learned to the immediate requirements of the situation, and to the capabilities of the American soldier. True to its conviction that the American army in the war would not do well to adopt in their entirety either French or British ideals, but must retain the native, the framers of the programme emphasized those parts of the training which, perfected, have always marked our soldiers. Skill with the rifle, initiative, adaptability, nervous energy, were the good qualities which the programme sought to develop. The native faults of the American soldier, such as lack of obedience, untidiness, waste, extravagance, and casual attitude, it was sought to suppress or reform by the splendidly framed series of general orders on conduct, bearing, courtesy, and discipline, published at various dates between autumn and spring. Drill and instruction were to be given for thirty-six hours a week, extending to March 13; the field covered was practically the whole range of the Infantry Drill Regulations, with supplemental practice in the novel infantry arms — grenade, Stokes mortar, 37-millimeter field gun, automatic rifle. There was to be rifle and pistol practice on the range; extensive maneuvers and terrain exercises, up to include divisional problems of attack and defense, for both trench and open warfare, were prescribed in detail. It must have given the French and British authorities a feeling of great confidence in the knowledge and technical grasp of the American Staff which produced so thorough and well-balanced a scheme of instruction. Published early in November, the programme was put into immediate operation throughout the Division's infantry and machine-gun units. For the artillery brigade a similar set of instructions was drawn up, applicable to its own requirements. Planned to cover six weeks, from the first of November to the middle of December, the artillery programme was extended six weeks longer, to equalize the instruction periods of all arms. Officers and chosen non-coms attended schools in the morning while the batteries had mounted drill, usually under the First Sergeant. In the afternoon was target practice, in which all took part, the batteries and a few officers in the firing positions, the rest of the officers at the observatories for practice in conduct of fire. At night the French instructors would hold lectures or schools in the regimental mess halls, to drive in what had been learned during the day or to explain the knotty points. In the latter part of the training the officers were allowed to give more time to their commands; hikes and cross-country position marches were indulged in; much practice was had in occupying positions both by day and by night, in haste and at leisure; and several tactical brigade problems were undertaken, including the firing of a skeleton barrage. In all arms the regimental and battalion officers issued the appropriate orders to dovetail their programme's requirements into the many other demands which daily pressed for attention.

For, while it was realized by officers and men alike that the more quickly they were taught, the quicker would come the coveted honor of entering the firing-line, it was borne in upon them every day that a pioneer division must perform a score of tasks other than drill and maneuver. Problems of food, shelter, clothing, and sanitation had to be solved. Transport and communications had to be organized. Hundreds of men and dozens of officers were busy from dawn to dusk on work other than training for battle. The villages had to be cleaned and organized as billets; where accommodations were lacking, it was necessary to erect the so-called "Adrian" barracks — a kind of portable, knock-down bunk-house, designed to shelter about one hundred men. Much labor was required to make habitable the lofts, stables, and outhouses where the men were lodged. Every day large details went to the woods, under guidance of the French forest service, to cut firewood; and it was a curious sight to see the men come in at nightfall, each carrying a long branch or sapling to be split into logs at the company kitchens. The roads in the area, hammered by the heavy traffic of the *camions*, had begun to break down a little, and repairs to these vital arteries required the service of many hands. To store, handle, and issue supplies at the congested railhead in Certilleux was task enough for a company each day; a telephone system for the entire divisional area had to be organized and set in operation independent, as far as possible, of the existing French civilian system. At Bazoilles, where a vast system of hospital building was under way, there was need of large details for construction work. To handle the increasing volume of correspondence, reports, and records at all headquarters, drafts had to be made on every unit to obtain competent clerks, orderlies, and stenographers. A considerable interior guard was required in each village, to watch the water-supply, the meager woodpile, the tempting café, the local storehouse. Typical was the experience of the ammunition train, which, in November and December, had to detail between 750 and 875 daily as labor troops. It needed the best ingenuity of commanding officers and their adjutants to insure the attendance at drill or instruction, on some days, of even a minimum enlisted strength, so large were the details required for other duties.

Another set of circumstances prevented obtaining full value from the programme or strict conformity with its requirements. These were the weather and the physical condition of the troops. Throughout the autumn and early winter rain was continuous. The drill fields were ankle-deep in mud, the roads like river-beds. The dim November and December daylight hardly sufficed that the troops, moving out for drill at an hour just after sunrise, should return before the dusk of early evening. The men were always wet and cold; their barracks, mess-houses, latrines, were all deep in a miry clay which made cleanliness of person or good condition of arms and equipment an ideal almost impossible to realize. The men had only the most scanty provision of light in their poor lodgings. No fires were allowable in the lofts and stables, even if stoves and firewood had been attainable. Their clothes were shockingly ragged; their shoes were fast giving way, since it was almost impossible to dry, clean, or grease them; their rations were none too abundant or regular. It was not long, therefore, before many of the men were rendered physically incapable of regular attendance at the drill ground or target range. More than once an entire platoon had to be excused from drill because of the condition of its shoes. The fight against vermin and the diseases resultant from uncleanliness of person took on a somewhat serious turn; laryngitis and an occasional pneumonia made their appearance. The inevitable danger to morale from homesickness, lack of any amusement or diversion, and physical hardship was a factor in the men's condition which gave commanding officers some anxious hours, as they saw the days and weeks pass with the requirements of the ironclad training programmes not fully carried out in this or that company or battalion.

No description of the first winter spent in France by the Twenty-Sixth and the other pioneer divisions would be complete without a mention of the immense difficulty of obtaining supplies and transport. It illustrates vividly the tremendous tasks thrust on the various American headquarters, whether at Chaumont, Paris, the base ports, Tours (where the Service of Supply came to be centered), or at the divisions themselves. Where an entire system of distribution had to be built up, not only for the few troops already in France, but for the hundreds of thousands still to come; where the main base of supplies was three thousand miles away across a sea not secure against enemy marauders; where dock and warehouse facilities were meager, the railroad system already congested, and ocean tonnage scarce; when expert advice was divided, and counsels even as to the most advantageous way of employing the American troops still far from unanimous; where the resources of the Allies in matters of munitions, food, and forage were strictly limited, can it be wondered that the machinery of supply failed to work with speed or regularity? The result, however, was great hardship. It was toward the end of November that ordnance supplies for the infantry of the Twenty-Sixth began to arrive in any quantity. From French sources were received Hotchkiss machine guns (model 1914), Chauchat automatic rifles, Vivan-Bessières rifle grenades, hand grenades of both the offensive and defensive types, and gas masks which later were supplanted by the British "box respirators." Enough ammunition was issued to afford practical training with the infantry weapons; so at length the anxiety of the brigadiers in this regard was somewhat allayed. But delay in the issue of these utilities seriously interfered with systematic instruction; and such minor but necessary articles of equipment as trench knives, entrenching tools, pistols, compasses, wire-cutters, and Véry signal pistols were not available until a date considerably later. The artillery in the Coetquidan area was less badly off, for the brigade received its allotment of field pieces and all necessary equipment from French sources at various dates early in October.[1]

The transport situation, to complete the tale of woe, was, during the first weeks after the Division was settled in its area, well-nigh desperate. To send rations, forage, and supplies from the railhead or quartermaster's storeshouse to the various regimental distributing points by truck, and thence to the smaller units by wagon, in accordance with regulations and the prescribed system, would have required the full amount of supply material in the tables of organization. The Neufchâteau area covered many square miles; the steep hills, slippery with mud and ice, made hauling slow and difficult. But at first there were only three trucks available for the use of all the troops in the region. Later, eleven French *camions* were secured, and then some thirty, from the same source. Toward the middle of November authority was secured to make use of fifty-six cargo trucks which were found available at Saint-Nazaire. Two truck companies were sent from the 101st Supply Train to bring this windfall home over the road; and presently they arrived, loaded down with miscellaneous quartermaster and ordnance supplies, from canned tomatoes to horseshoes and shovels. How gleefully were the trucks received! How great was the sorrow when the enjoyment of these riches was curtailed a few days after their reception! But the Forty-Second Division, billeted not far away, was in far worse condition than even the Yankees, and so twenty-eight of the new trucks were sent away to these less fortunate neighbors, whose barracks had been in part erected by the 101st Engineers. The First Division was also in a bad plight, with respect to transport, and so one truck company of the Twenty-Sixth was transferred from the 101st Supply Train to the First Division permanently. From the artillery also, away by itself in Brittany, came similar reports of a crippling shortage in power vehicles and animal transport. For a long time the 101st Ammunition Train, which was attached, for training, to the artillery, had no trucks whatever on which the drivers could be instructed. On October 29 twenty trucks were brought from Saint-Nazaire by a detail from the train, and were employed not only for demonstration purposes, but also to haul supplies and ammunition for the other troops at Coetquidan. On December 19 the ammunition train of the First Division turned over to the 101st some twenty two-ton trucks, of which only three were serviceable; but Yankee ingenuity was brought into play with such good effect that, with only one broken-down French forge available for repair work, fourteen trucks were rendered serviceable within three days. It is not hard to imagine the variety of uses to which were put the assorted passenger cars assigned to the brigade and regimental commanders! A motor ambulance was kept as busy as an interurban trolley express car.

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[1] The arrangement by which the American artillery was to be armed with the French field piece assured that there would be brought into action on the Allied lines a preponderance of the best field artillery in existence.

The "soixante-quinze," or "75," named from its caliber of 75 millimeters, deserves in any record of Allied endeavor a more than passing reference. Introduced in 1898, often copied but never equaled, the new weapon solved one of the principal problems of field artillery. By ingenious mechanical devices which took up the shock of recoil and prevented any disarrangement of aim, the rate of fire was enormously increased. Previously, a field piece had to be relaid after each aimed shot; but this requirement was now obviated. Chief among the innovations was that the gun was not attached to the axle-tree, but to a buffer in a cradle which ran the gun back automatically, the recoil being taken up by a cylinder below the gun, in which there was a secret combination of springs, compressed air of a certain density, and glycerine. Increased range was secured by lengthening the gun to nearly nine feet, and by giving it a slow-burning propelling charge. Muzzle velocities were 1739 foot-seconds (for 16-pound shrapnel) and 2050 foot-seconds (for 12-pound high-explosive shell). The "75" was capable of rapid fire as high as twenty-five aimed shots a minute, and developed a most extraordinary accuracy.

November 6 the first consignment of animals for the infantry was received at Rebeuville — some 400 French draft horses. But these were in such a weakened condition, from disease and emaciation, that the great majority were fit only for the hospital, and many died almost at once. Later in the month, the Division received from Saint-Nazaire 665 mules and 230 horses, American stock. These animals were in good condition, and ultimately were distributed to the infantry units, though distribution was delayed somewhat owing to the prevailing shortage of trucks in which to haul forage. The artillery, at Coetquidan, received numerous issues of horses from the French remount service, so that by January it had on hand some 3000 horses and 200 mules, mostly in poor condition.

Mention is made of these many physical difficulties with which the Division had to contend between November and February inclusive, not to paint any lurid tale of hardships. These matters are of interest in a military history because they have a direct bearing on morale. The soldier who is cold, wet, half-sick, badly nourished, badly lodged, and short of necessary equipment, is by just so much incapacitated from deriving full benefit from military training and instruction. But, on the other side, the discomforts and hardships of the first winter in France proved in more ways than one a decided benefit. The hardships helped to discover and form the likely officers as nothing else could.

The platoon, company, or battalion officer, who worked every day to better the condition of his men's billets and general living conditions, who retained his cheeriness and devotion to duty throughout the days of continual rain and frost and mud, who set an example of patience and grit, was the officer whom the men trusted, whose little unit was conspicuous for good discipline and good spirit. Under hard conditions of living and weather, the lazy and incompetent were also quickly discovered. Characters were developed. The good and the bad took on a higher relief. The promising material for the non-commissioned grades came quickly to the surface; the incompetent sergeant also found his place — usually two grades or so lower down the scale. Another positive advantage derived from the experience was that the troops were early taught lessons on the subject of making the best of things. The sum of the hardships was, actually, to season and toughen the Division very promptly.

Two factors in the generally rapid and satisfactory progress of the troops in military knowledge, at this period, were due to the tireless and intelligent assistance of the French.

The first of these was the work of the French Military Mission. This was composed of a number of officers and non-commissioned officers of the French establishment, both staff and line, selected for their experience in warfare, their knowledge of English, exceptional qualities of mind and personal character. Their duties were manifold. Attached to the headquarters of the Division, brigades and regiments, they served as points of contact between the troops and the French both military and civilian. They gave suggestions and instruction in methods of warfare, of administration, supply, and other staff work. They opened all avenues by which could be secured the supplies required for the equipment and comfort of the troops; they contributed most painstaking critiques on the discipline, drill, and military efficiency of the units to which they were accredited; they made frequent reports to the French authorities; they assisted most effectively in smoothing out difficulties between the civilian population and the troops — settling claims, advising, interpreting. Their work in helping the Division through its first difficult weeks in France, and their later skillful assistance in the field, is part of the Division's permanent history. Long after the period of mere reminiscence is past; when all parts of the history will take on their proper proportion, one believes that an outstanding, enduring fact of record will be the work of these French soldiers in guiding the steps of our officers and men in warfare. At every turn of the Division's life there is apparent the influence of the French adviser; at all crises the assistance and guidance of the French, while never obtruded, were always to be had by a commanding officer of whatever rank.[1]

A second factor in the early training of the troops of prime importance was the work of Colonel (later *général de brigade*) Bertrand, commanding the 162d Infantry Regiment, who in the eyes of the admiring Americans embodied all the traits of the *beau sabreur* of romantic tradition. Of distinguished reputation as a cavalry commander in Africa, alert, elegant, a fearless leader in desperate actions, he gave his very best to aid in the instruction of the new American troops. His mere physical presence on the maneuver field, his infectious high spirits, his soldierly courtesy, and heavy-handed discipline had an effect absolutely electrical on all those Americans with whom he came in contact, at this time or later. From his headquarters in Frebécourt, a village just to the north of Neufchâteau, Colonel Bertrand directed daily a series of demonstrations by his seasoned veterans of the approved French formations for attack or defense, movement on the field, the proper handling of grenades (of which at the time the French were making great use), the bayonet, and the machine gun. Beginning with demonstrations by squads of grenadiers and machine-gunners in Frebécourt, conducted for the benefit of regimental and battalion officers, the work was soon greatly extended. In trucks provided by the French a battalion of infantry at a time would be taken to the drill ground, kept there for the day, and minutely instructed by a battalion of the 162d in this or that tactical movement or method. Platoon and company officers were shown how to deploy and maneuver their commands to meet varying conditions; the relative value and tactical worth of all the infantry utilities were taught to small groups. When it is understood that, at this time, not a battalion or company officer in the entire Expeditionary Force had ever handled one of the new weapons, had ever seen a modern company in combat formation, and was only beginning to receive copies of hastily compiled provisional drill manuals translated from the French or adapted from the British, it will be appreciated how valuable were these practical demonstrations of the veteran battalions of the 162d in the field. This regiment had just been relieved from a long tour of duty on the Verdun front, where it had suffered severely. Of its original officers only two had survived the three years of continual warfare. Colonel Bertrand was the fourth regimental commander since 1914, all his predecessors having been battle casualties. As a combat unit the 162d had won an enviable reputation.[1] Thus the American troops were brought into daily contact with battalions who did not perform a drill to illustrate principles taught in a book, but who reproduced actual conditions, formations, methods which they had experienced or employed time and again in fierce attack and stubborn defense. The worth to the new men was consequently very great. Not only did they learn methods, but they learned what real fighting men, some of the toughest French infantry, were like.

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[1] To name those officers of the *mission militaire* who were longest on duty with the Division, whose work was perhaps the most conspicuous, one should include Major Amaury du Boisrouvray; Captain Westphalen Le Maître; Captain Malick (all at Division Headquarters); Captain De St.-Croix (51st Infantry Brigade); Captain Le Meitour (52d Infantry Brigade); Captain L. E. Ney; Lieutenant L. Cheippe; Lieutenant J. Toulouse; Lieutenant Henriot; Lieutenant C. de Benoist d'Azy and Lieutenant Masselin (both with 51st Field Artillery Brigade).

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[1] The complete battle record of this splendid French regiment follows. It is of interest, from the standpoint of the military historian, as showing how continuously our French allies were compelled to employ their units; the record illustrates also very vividly the devotion of the French *poilu* in the defense of his country. The 162d, before the war, formed part of the garrison of the Verdun

It must not be understood, however, that the Division accepted the gospel of tactics as preached by the *poilu* and his chiefs without reservations. Yankee fashion, the American listened, and then made his own decision. It was that period in the evolution of tactical theory — changed so often in the course of the war — when the cry was all for "specialists." Almost the first point upon which the instructors from the 162d insisted was that the American companies should be at once divided into permanent groups of riflemen, bombers, rifle grenadiers, automatic riflemen, signalmen, and agents of liaison. The training was all in the direction of training each group to become proficient in one branch only, and rather to neglect the rifle in favor of the other infantry weapons. Protracted

fortress. On August 22, 1914, it first gained contact with the enemy in the vicinity of Pierrepont, where its stubborn resistance, under the command of Colonel Trouchand, cost 700 men and 30 officers. During the First Battle of the Marne, as a unit of the Forty-Second Division, it won a victory at Soisy-aux-Bois and Saint-Prix, on September 8, 1914. From October 21 till December 10, it was posted in the line along the river Yser; from January 2 till July 15, 1915, it was continually in the line in the region of the Argonne; on September 25, under the command of Colonel Chaudon, it attacked, in Champagne. From March 10 till May 23, 1916, it assisted actively in the heroic defense of Verdun. In September of the same year, it participated in the gigantic battle on the Somme, under Colonel de Mattarel. In April, 1917, on the Aisne, it gained a success against the fortified Mauchamp Farm; and then returned, in August, to a position before Verdun, where it fought in Caurières Wood and Chaume Wood. Transferred to duty before Compiègne, in June of 1918, it checked the German advance on the Aronde, thanks to a heroic resistance at Porte Farm, in an action which cost the regiment some 30 officers and 1000 men, casualties in four days of desperate fighting (June 10–13). On August 2 it took part in the relief of Soissons; between August 28 and September 5 it was continuously engaged in a series of savage attacks which drove back the Germans across the heights near Crouy and the famous Laffaux Mill, on the Chemin des Dames.

trench warfare had caused reliance to be placed mainly on weapons delivering a plunging fire at short range (the grenade) and on the rapid fire of the machine gun or automatic. True, the rifleman of exceptional proficiency was accepted as valuable for long-range sharpshooting or "sniping"; but he was merely one of still another class of specialists, requiring his own equipment (telescopic sight, disguises, shields, what-not), together with intensive training at a special school. To this theory of tactical organization of the small unit of infantry was opposed the well-grounded belief of American Headquarters in the value of the American rifleman as such. It was deemed best to adopt French practice with such modifications as suited the characteristic qualities of our troops; and this was done in the Twenty-Sixth Division. It was one of the points of training on which the Division Commander insisted from the outset. As much range practice as possible, with the pitifully meager facilities at hand, was given to all troops armed with the rifle; and the effort was made to acquaint all the infantry with all the infantry utilities, instead of creating groups each trained to be expert with only a single weapon.

Other influences were at work, moreover, which bore directly on the Division's preparation for war. Nor can one omit the schools at Bazoilles, Gondrecourt, and Langres, to take them in the order in which they were opened.

At Bazoilles there was established a school for teaching selected officers and non-commissioned officers the British manual of the bayonet — at this time judged the best, as tested by battle. For, along with the motions of thrust and cut and parry, there was instilled by the British bayonet instructors a curiously vivid fighting spirit, which urged the soldier to get to grips with his adversary and kill him hand-to-hand. To watch this instruction was like witnessing a drill in murder; there was a grim fascination in the way the instructors spurred their pupils past the point of simulated ferocity, to a veritable lust-to-kill, which often proved dangerous enough, even at drill. Savage and primitive, this exercise gave the still easy-going lads a new point of view; it taught them what real in-fighting meant. At Bazoilles were also taught the British setting-up and suppling drills, which had remarkable results in teaching agility, smartness, and good carriage.

Gondrecourt, the station of the First Corps Schools, claimed a large and continuous attendance of officers, to whom were taught modern infantry tactics, in courses of three to six weeks, intensively; and the work was prosecuted under such conditions of weather, inadequate housing, hasty organization, and mud, as made the discomforts of the billeting area fade away. Here again, however, as throughout the history of all the first American organizations in France, it was grit and the desire to play the game, on the part of all concerned, that won the day. Officers were here from all the combat units of the Expeditionary Force; and here, too, as at Bazoilles, instruction was largely tinctured with British preferences and prejudices in tactical methods and theory. If a certain confusion of mind resulted, for the student officer, who had begun by accepting the French doctrine as orthodox, only to be told that the French, with all their excellent warlike virtues, were not quite abreast of the times, no great harm was done. The student simply endeavored to sift out from both schools that residuum which was plainly of use to an American. And it was most desirable for our people, also, to catch early in their training a reflection of British pluck and recklessness as an offset to French caution and strict economy of forces. Hastening back to their platoons and companies, these officers in turn became teachers, as did those sent to Bazoilles.

The personal teaching and example of the Division Commander was widely exerted among all ranks. That his men should be smart and alert under all circumstances —

doing their best to keep themselves and their equipment clean — carrying out their orders briskly — with a smile — "playing the game" with a will — these principles he taught tirelessly. Continually he visited battalions, and talked to the men in the most informal, personal manner. Pride in themselves, pride in the service, pride in their Division, he instilled in officers and men alike, with the result that, long before the troops went to the line, there had grown up an *esprit de corps*, no longer of individual units, but of the whole Division, which was to endure rather remarkably all through the Division's history.

But one discordant note was struck in the general concert of earnest work and mutual dependence. From a source quite impossible to discover at the time, perplexing even now in its obscurity, there spread a rumor that National Guard troops, such as composed the Forty-Second and Twenty-Sixth Divisions, were to be made of small account in the composition of the American fighting forces. One heard parroted the insistence that our divisions must be national, not local, in character — that it was greater "to belong to the Nation than to a State." The charge was even made that a campaign of aspersion, disparagement, and neglect had been set in motion, under which the National Guard in France would dwindle and disappear.

These harmful rumors received wide circulation and credence. They were rife at all officers' schools; they were heard very early in the Staff College at Langres. As to the truth of such allegations — would it not appear superfluous to deny it? It must be confessed that the personal bearing of more than a few officers of the Regular establishment gave weight to a belief in their ill-will; and the opposition of the responsible military authorities to the National Guard system was as open and of as long a standing as their rooted belief in the incompetence of the Guard troops. But it would seem incredible, nevertheless, that even the dullest of the class would countenance a deliberate *sabotage* of any regiments or divisions, of whatever origin or descent, when these were in the heat of preparation for immediate service in the field.

But the effect of these rumors was unfortunate. A certain rancor was aroused in a body of officers who might feel that they were marked for discrimination. The great majority accepted this as a challenge; they set out to prove that they were apt to learn as they were keen to fight; they would prove that they could master the new tactics as quickly as any Regular; they would prove that they could lead troops as troops deserve to be led. Resentment spurred them to redoubled efforts. An inconsiderable number, feeling that, while they would do their duty loyally, it was idle to expect any recognition, let their interest sag perceptibly. And the wisest treatment was required in the months to come before this cancer could be eradicated.[1]

On November 11 the Division received a visit from the Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Force. With a view to inspecting living conditions General Pershing traversed the entire divisional area, personally exploring typical dwelling-places, kitchens, horse lines, and headquarters offices. No effort was made to inspect the troops, who were paraded in groups and detachments outside their respective billets without equipment. But a thorough examination was made of their quarters; many points were brought to the attention of commanding officers whereby living conditions might be bettered; and the situation, as known to officers on the spot, was thoroughly inquired into.

Of the scores of officers and men detached for study at other schools than those already mentioned, a brief word will suffice. It is enough to indicate the variety of instruction by the very best teachers which it was the fortune of the Division, like the other pioneer divisions, to enjoy. Teaching which later became a bit perfunctory was at first most vigorous and alive. The effort put forth by the instructors was immense; and all testimony unites in commending the keenness of the students. Even the general officers received a tour of instruction under French or British auspices. To the Division Commander (October 31 to November 10) was demonstrated the organization of sectors and methods of attack, on the British front before Cambrai and on the French front north of Soissons. The brigadiers and selected field officers from the infantry also made similar trips, each lasting ten days or more. Officers and men of the machine-gun units were sent to school at Camiers or other centers; artillerymen took courses at Saumur or Fontainebleau; the signalmen were taught the intricacies of wireless, earth telegraphy (T.P.S.), blinker operation, or pigeon flying, in short courses at Gondrecourt or Neufchâteau.

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[1] Later, when the 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 32d, 33d, 34th, 35th, 36th, and 42d Divisions, to name the more conspicuous of the National Guard Divisions in France, were being actively employed on the smoking battle line, the citizen-soldiers felt better. They might have been rated low, in years past, by the efficiency tests of peace-times; but when the guns began to pound, the militia was certainly entrusted with lots of room "up front."

Of very great importance for the Division was the Army General Staff College. The influence of its teaching was carried early and directly to the Division Staff's organization and operation. Not fewer than fourteen officers performing duty on the Staff, at one time or another, were graduates of the College. Conducted by some of the ablest military students and educators of the Regular establishment, with lecturers carefully selected from the British and French Staffs, with stiff courses, the College rises inevitably to the notice of any historian who attempts to trace the life of any division, corps, or army in France. It was the Division's good fortune to be able to send to the College, as early as November 25, a group of some fifteen student officers, to be entered in the first course with groups from the First, Forty-Second, and Second Divisions (including several Marine officers), and from General

Headquarters. The interest of the study of General Staff work itself; the keen competition for good ratings; the dogged, and often successful, efforts of officers newly from civilian life to catch and excel those of the Regular establishment, who, with a better grounding, might be supposed to have a start too great to overcome; the inspiring teaching of the French and British, headed by Colonel Koechlin-Schwartz and Lieutenant-Colonel Needham respectively; the whole atmosphere of efficiency which pervaded the first course at Langres, combined to impress the student officers very deeply. No effort was spared by the college authorities to make much of the importance which, in their eyes, should inhere in the position of an officer of the General Staff; the student officers at the College were allowed privileges which caused a little discontent among the officers attending other near-by schools; there was danger that an officer would acquire as much self-conceit as knowledge of staff duties — that he would catch the air but not the substance of authority. But on the whole the course was all profit. The Staff College method and technique was accepted as the standard of all staff work of the Expeditionary Force. What the War College and Leavenworth had been for the Regular Army, Langres was to the Expeditionary Force. The best practice of the most successful staffs in the Allied armies was put at the disposal of our men. Troop movements by rail or march or bus; billeting; organization of a sector in the line or of a rest area; supply in all its aspects; methods of relieving troops in the line; proper forms of orders; the service of intelligence; tactical employment of infantry and artillery aeroplanes, tanks, light railways; aerostatics, road repair — these are only some of the subjects given careful exposition. There was constant emphasis on the cardinal qualities of a staff officer — loyalty, foresight, tact, effort to anticipate the needs of the troops; energy. The old misconception of a staff officer as an "office man," or a kind of ornamental secretary to a commanding general, was swept clean away. A new respect was built up for the tireless work, shrewd intelligence, and scientific method exemplified by the officers whom the Staff College called as instructors. To those who completed the course in February there was given a further opportunity for receiving instruction of value. After a three days' survey of the organization of General Headquarters in Chaumont, officers were sent to various French and British corps and divisions, for personal observation of staff methods in the field, lasting ten days or two weeks. A course of instruction, which tended later to become conventionalized, was for the first group of officers from the earliest arrived divisions an illuminating experience.

So, then, passed the early winter. Under daily instruction and ceaseless drill a steady improvement became evident. Shoulders straightened; discipline tightened; sickness (never a menace) grew less prevalent; supply, housing, and transport (always serious problems) came to give less concern. The welfare agencies (first, the Red Cross) began to function a little; mail began to be received from home; fewer men went absent without leave.

This last breach of discipline, a constant and one of the most serious weaknesses of the American soldier in France, could be profitably studied with relation to the soldier's feeling that he was or was not required for fighting. Let him scent a battle in the air and he stayed with the colors; let a period of inaction or tedious routine of drill be ordered and promptly his youth and restless curiosity took him far afield. Authorized leaves, during the training period, were out of the question; the daily grind was hard; the fascination of the strange, new land was irresistible. Whatever the reason, there were many American soldiers absent from their station and duties between October and February, from the Twenty-Sixth as from the other divisions. The number, while never reaching the scandalous proportion that absented itself during the month following the armistice, a year later, was nevertheless disquieting. But with the rumor that the Division was to follow the First to a place on the firing-line the men flocked back and stayed.

In many other respects, too, one noticed a change for the better in the look of the Division. Officers gained in authority. The habit of command grew apace. Earlier misgivings in regard to the ability of platoon and company commanders to enforce discipline, in view of their militia antecedents or sketchy, training-camp education, were largely assuaged. The eager spirit in which the National Guard and Reserve officers had attacked and absorbed the instruction at Gondrecourt or Camiers or Langres had surprised the authorities; they learned, as a matter of fact, faster than the Regular student officer, and worked no less conscientiously. And as much of the knowledge taught was perfectly strange to all Americans, the initial gap between the professional equipment of the Regular and militia branches tended rapidly to close.

An awakening to a kind of divisional consciousness ran through the scattered units. Officers and men got to know each other; common duties and troubles united them. The Division Commander's presence daily with one or another of the battalions was of great value in pulling them together. Officers and men got the conviction that, while he was exacting, content only with their best, he was always working for their good. Remote as most division commanders must be, still, when the General fell seriously ill, in November, his danger woke a genuine concern in all corners of the area. His insistence on the unity, the special character, of the "Yankee Division" had an undoubted effect in awakening that very quality.

To this end also a contribution was made by the work performed by all units, in building a model system of trenches, which by the first of December streaked the stony plateau southwest of Neufchâteau, west of Rebeuville. In large working parties, under French supervision, the engineers and infantry laid out and constructed a complete battalion sector of fire, cover, and support trenches, with communications, posts of command and of observation, machine-gun emplacements, snipers' posts, signal system, shelters, and wire. Enemy trenches were traced also. And here, night after night in the snow and cold of December and January, the troops were led through a number of battalion maneuvers — attack, defense, raid, patrol. These were made as realistic as possible; and officers and men profited enormously. A battalion at a time would occupy this "Noncourt Sector," so called, so that all had the opportunity of learning, not only the details of trench routine, but also the main aspects of trench warfare. Principles of the textbooks were abundantly illustrated by actual conditions; detailed critiques by superior officers, both American and French, showed the regimental and battalion officers those things which they had done rightly or wrongly, on the spot. The experience of the "Noncourt Sector" had a further value, in that those dreary nights in the trenches brought home to the dullest lad in the ranks the realization that, in all likelihood, before many days, he would be shifted from his post on the make-believe fire-step to another overlooking a bit of the real No Man's Land, where the tireless enemy was waiting.

The list of changes among commanding officers, and officers of the Division Staff, which occurred at intervals during the period November 1 to February 1, is rather extensive and, from certain angles, rather suggestive. First to be relieved were two of the original colonels together with two or three field officers. Their services were required by General Headquarters in another field than the field of battle; they were chosen to assist in the organization and administration of the Provost Marshal's department, of the projected leave areas in the south of France, or elsewhere in the Service of Supply. January 2, 1918, Colonel William C. Hayes was transferred from command of the 104th Infantry to provost duty, and later was allowed to resign and return to the United States. January 11 Colonel E. L. Isbell, of the 102d Infantry, was sent to duty at Tours and later to a leave area. These officers were succeeded respectively by Colonel George H. Shelton, transferred from duty as the Division's Chief of Staff, and by Colonel John H. Parker, who had achieved a wide distinction as an exponent of advanced ideas on the tactical employment of machine guns. The assignment of these two veteran officers of the Regular Army to important positions of command was, as events turned out, of great importance in shaping the history of the Division in its field operations. To Major W. S. Gatchell, 103d Machine-Gun Battalion, succeeded Major A. Ashworth; in the 101st Field Signal Battalion, Major H. G. Chase was succeeded by Major O. S. Albright (January 10). Major T. C. Baker took command of the 101st Supply Train on January 21, while in Headquarters Troop Captain Wolcott was succeeded by Captain B. L. Ashby, the former becoming aide-de-camp to the Division Commander. Field officers sent to duty away from the Division included Lieutenant-Colonel Edwin E. Lamb, to provost duty; Lieutenant-Colonel T. Howe, 102d Field Artillery, to duty in the postal service; Lieutenant-Colonel R. K. Hale, 101st Field Artillery, to duty at General Headquarters; Major Harold Estey, 101st Engineers, to duty as railhead officer in Soissons. The list is not complete, and is set forth to illustrate how far the Twenty-Sixth and other pioneer divisions in France were drawn upon, from necessity, to furnish officers for a multiplicity of duties away from troops. Officers were required for a great variety of administrative work all over France and in England. The supply first to hand was composed of officers from civilian occupations and antecedents, professional or business. Quite unknown in army circles as properly qualified regimental or battalion commanders of combat groups, in some cases, perhaps, not giving an entirely good impression when judged as field officers, but possessing ascertained good records as men of legal or business ability, it was wholly natural to make use of such men in ports, bases of supply, railheads, or leave and school areas, or with the police, for example, where they could be very useful. Thus a large number of Reserve and National Guard officers of field rank were transferred away from combat divisions for this, if for no other reason. Their places were filled, more often than not, by officers of the Regular establishment, whose West Point training or years of service as non-commissioned officers appeared to guarantee their ability as troop leaders.

In the Division Staff also many changes took place about this time. To duty as Chief of Staff, in place of Colonel Shelton, there was assigned Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Dowell, who till then had been the Division Judge-Advocate. Colonel Beacham, Division Quartermaster, was transferred to the Forty-Second Division, and was succeeded by Captain (later Lieutenant-Colonel) A. L. Pendleton; Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Simonds (later Brigadier-General and Chief of Staff, Third Corps) was succeeded as Division Adjutant by Major L. W. Cass, who in turn gave place, upon transfer away from the Division, to Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) Charles A. Stevens. A considerable number of company and battery officers also left the Division at this time for other duties. Aviation, Ordnance, and the Service of Supply took many of them; not a few were retained at the schools as instructors or in administrative work. Later, when the artillery was on the march to relieve the gunners of the First Division, with no warning whatsoever, six of the twelve light battery commanders and twelve more of the most valuable officers in the brigade were summarily detailed by name to proceed as instructors to various artillery centers. And as all their places could not be filled, since the replacement system was not yet functioning, the various units approached the conclusion of their training somewhat undermanned in officer personnel. The final month of the period, when the instruction of the troops was being rounded off and perfected, saw six of the more important units pass into the hands of new commanders.

CHAPTER V

THE CHEMIN DES DAMES

THE programme of training prescribed courses extending into the month of March. Late in January, however, it was decided by General Headquarters, in accordance with the expressed desires of the French High Command, to effect a change in the scheme of preparation of the troops for warfare. It appeared that, in spite of all difficulties, such satisfactory progress had been made in training as to warrant giving the Twenty-Sixth the experience which had fallen to the lot of the First Division in January. This was, briefly, to supplement the work of the drill and maneuver ground, school, and target range with a tour of duty in a so-called quiet sector, so as to accustom the troops to the methods of trench warfare and routine, and to exercise the officers in the duties of maintaining and administering a front-line trench system. Supervision and tactical control of the troops would rest with the French.

The original plan appears to have contemplated sending only two battalions of infantry at a time for this new duty. But on the urgent representation of the Division Commander, this was so far altered as to permit the entire Division to proceed to the line at one time. In consequence, the artillery brigade and the ammunition train, then expected in the Neufchâteau area from Coetquidan, had its destination changed to Soissons. And thither the gunners proceeded, by rail, the movement starting on January 31 with Guer as the entraining point. On the first days of February also the other troops moved by rail to their new scene of activity.

Reconnaissance parties preceded their units by a day or two. For the artillery, Brigadier-General Lassiter, accompanied by his aides, the three regimental commanders, and billeting officers, made the preliminary arrangements, arriving in Soissons on January 31. To prepare the way for the infantry and other units Brigadier-General Traub was sent ahead with a suitable detail. And so, when the troops began to arrive, it was possible for them to proceed without delay to the posts which the French had assigned.

The movement to a new area followed close on the reorganization of the Staff on lines adapted, in part, from European practice. Hitherto deficiencies of staff organization had been marked in all the wars of the United States. How fatal they were to the proper working-out of the plans of field commanders the history of the Civil War campaigns abundantly proves. To insure for the future, therefore, proper division of staff duties the Field Service Regulations prescribed, and Langres explained, a system practically identical with that of the French or British establishments. This provided for General Staff sections in each army, corps, and division, consisting of three departments [1] each under an Assistant Chief of Staff, each with a distinct responsibility and duty in connection with supply and administration (G–1); intelligence (G–2); operations and training (G–3). The Adjutant became the officer in charge of records and personnel; staff departments, such as the Inspector, Quartermaster, Signals, Judge-Advocate, and Surgeon, tended to be brought under the coördinating and administrative First Section. Every detail by which the will of the Commanding General was worked out being thus apportioned to one or another of the three General Staff Section heads, the system was well planned to simplify and energize all staff work. Not that it worked perfectly from its inception. The efficiency of a good French staff was far to seek. The whole conception was novel in practice in the American army. There were misunderstandings, cross-purposes, a certain resentment on the part of long-established staff departments at their partial subordination to the new administrative section. It took time to make the machine "function," to employ a term most dear to all staff men. But the essential soundness of the system was abundantly proved in the course of the Division's duty in the field. And it was aided to perform its work in great part — as must always be the case — by the fact that the personnel of the Division Staff was a long time associated and generally good friends. The danger of the system lay, obviously, in that an ambitious or over-confident or disloyal Chief of Staff, or one of his assistants, might be carried away by his special knowledge of a given situation into preparing and issuing orders, in the name of the Division Commander, which the latter might not approve or had not directed. The corresponding advantage, however, was very great — namely, that as the heads of the General Staff sections made part of the General's household, enjoyed his confidence, and knew his mind, they were able to frame orders intelligently, exactly expressing the commander's desires, without his being obliged to concern himself with details. Later, when the staff machine was in steady operation, day and night, its action was far different from that of the somewhat creaky apparatus which piloted and pushed the Division away from the Neufchâteau area to the famous sector of the Chemin des Dames during the first days of February, 1918.

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[1] In the armies, and the army corps, other sections were created; but the division organization included only three sections at any time.

For it was on the Chemin des Dames, some five miles north of Soissons and southwest of Laon, that the Division received its baptism of fire. The position had been hotly contested from the beginning of the war.[1] Its high plateaux, rough, steep scarps, and ragged forest land formed a veritable bastion of the German defensive line. Its quaint name was derived from that of an ancient high-road running east and west along its principal ridge, close to the demolished fort of Malmaison. The line was composed of a series of strong points or centers of resistance organized with machine guns or automatic rifles to provide mutually flanking fire in all forward parts of the area. Defining the front of the position, separating the Allied and German outpost lines, which ran on an average about five hundred yards apart, was an unfordable stretch of the Oise–Aisne canal, curving from east to west through north, through the marshy valley of the little Ailette, to which the high ridges of the Chemin des Dames plateau descended by fairly easy slopes. Of further tactical interest were the extensive tract of woodland known as the Forêt de Pinon, which extended over all the west, or left, flank, and the ruined hamlets of Pinon, Chavignon, Pargny, and Pargny-Filain along the front slopes and in the low land of the valley toward the center. Remarkable limestone quarries were scattered through the whole area. Worked for centuries, tunneled out of the chalky hills in vast galleries and grottoes, they constituted a series of important tactical features, both as affording places for the concentration and secure shelter of large bodies of troops, and as advantageously placed posts of command. Less extensive surface cuttings were utilized as units in the chain of strong points, transformed into miniature fortresses, or as shelters for kitchens, aid stations, or forward munition depots. The general conformation of the ground can hardly be defined, so irregular and confused was the tangle of spurs and ridges branching off from the principal Malmaison plateau separating the Aisne valley on the south, in the rear, from that of the Ailette, along the front. The entire terrain was deeply pitted with shell craters and scored with sections of abandoned trenches, relics of the fierce contests of previous years. The road system was fairly extensive, and its

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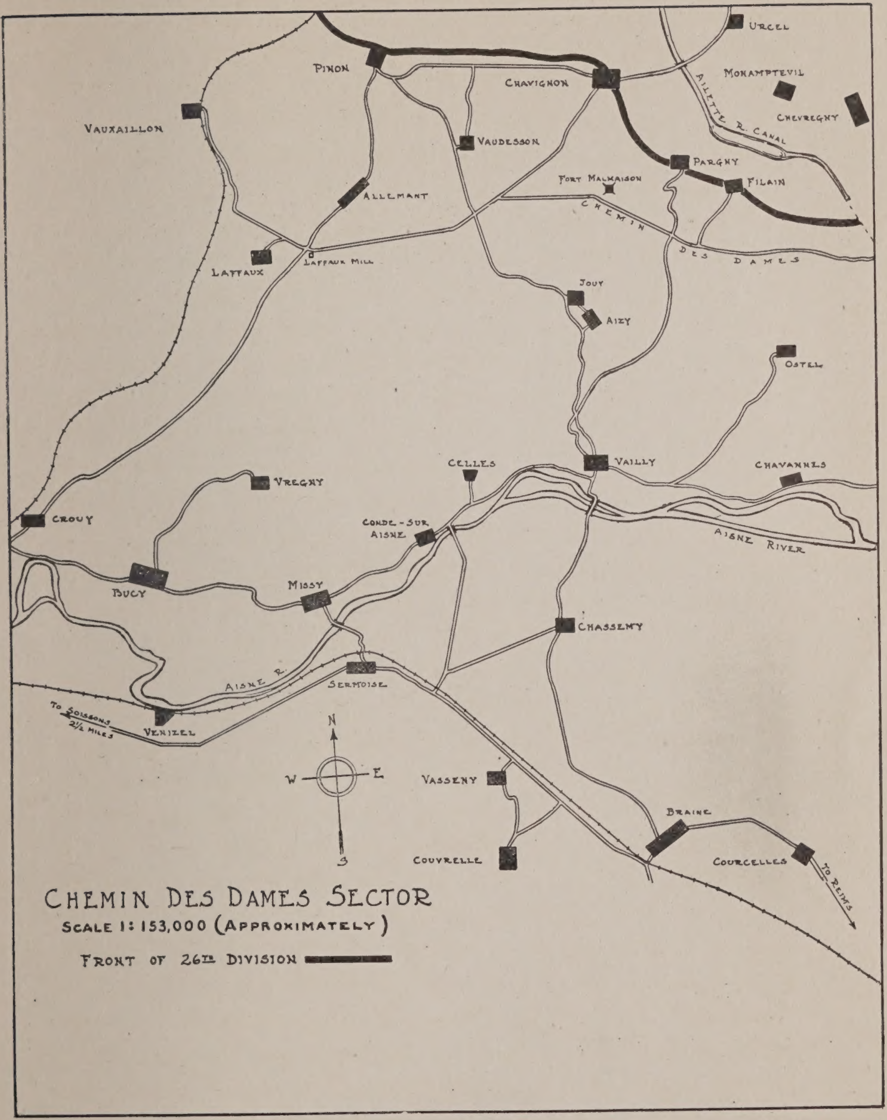
[1] Notably by the British Second Corps, on September 12–13, 1914; and by the French under Nivelle in April and October, 1917.



CHEMIN DES DAMES SECTOR
SCALE 1: 153,000 (APPROXIMATELY)
FRONT OF 26TH DIVISION ▬

principal axes were in fair repair. The villages of Jouy, Vailly, Missy-Condé, and a half-dozen others, were utilized as assembly places for battalions in support or reserve, while the whole of the rear area, along the Aisne valley as far as Soissons (the railhead) or Couvrelles (the location of Division Headquarters), was thoroughly organized for the service of supply and evacuation.

For the moment the sector was quiet. The fierce attacks of the French in the autumn of 1917, supplementing the only partially successful offensive along the Aisne and in Champagne during the spring of the same year, had been followed by a protracted period of stabilization. Local activities might continue to the north and east, as part of the wearing-down of the enemy's manhood strength; but on the Chemin des Dames reigned a calm nearly as profound as that along the right of the Allied line between Pont-à-Mousson and the Swiss border. A somewhat perfunctory daily harassing fire, occasional patrols, a little raid to get prisoners, comprised about the sum of the region's warfare at the time the Twenty-Sixth went in.

Hither, then, in accordance with arrangements perfected between the French authorities and General Headquarters, came the troops of the Division. Placed under the tactical command of the French Eleventh Army Corps (General de Maud'huy), the Division was to perform duty for about thirty days, "for training" (so ran Field Order No. 1) "in trench warfare of all divisional elements in units smaller than a brigade." [1] The movement was made by rail, the troops obtaining a new experience in loading themselves and their equipage into the standard French military trains, each of which was made up of seventeen flat-cars for guns or vehicles, thirty freight cars for enlisted men or horses (each car containing thirty-six men or eight horses), two coaches for officers, and one baggage van for the train crew, a total of fifty cars for each infantry battalion or its equivalent (1000 men). Some things cannot be taught in camp, among them the art of entraining and detraining. The experience of the artillery is illustrative. When the brigade left for the front, between January 31 and February 2, six hours were allowed for each battery to load, and in some instances this was scarcely too much. In the neighborhood of two and one half hours was the best record attained by any unit; and even that time was far too fast for most. But in the months to come, when moving as well as fighting had become second nature, records for entraining — to speak now only of the artillery — were made which were remarkable, indeed. The problem of loading a battery consists of stowing four guns, twelve caissons, and many miscellaneous vehicles, together with about 200 men and between 160 and 200 horses, as well as harness, food and forage, and equipment. This operation was performed by "E" Battery, 103d Field Artillery (heavy), on one occasion, in fourteen minutes, thirty seconds. "F" Battery of the same regiment made a record of twenty-one minutes, while most of the light batteries could load, later in their experience, in thirty or forty minutes at any time. But how considerable even on this first entrainment was the improvement of the Division at large in train discipline, as tested by the smart handling of baggage, animals, and equipment, and control of the men by their officers, only those can testify who had a hand in moving the first American arrivals from the base ports to the training areas. The memory of those riotous, cheerful, enthusiastic tourist parties was mercifully blotted out. The roadside raids at every halt, the men riding on the tops of the cars and the running-boards, the hilarious disorder, were less and less to be feared. Perhaps the men, even the most thoughtless, were sobered by the knowledge that they were really going to the line. They were intensely curious and eager, commenting on all the signs of war in the countryside; but they were too much afraid of being left behind to stray even a little; and they were very orderly.

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[1] The Eleventh *Corps d'Armée* was one of the original twenty-one corps of the French regular establishment, having Nantes as its territorial headquarters. At the time that the Twenty-Sixth was attached to it, the Eleventh Corps included three infantry divisions and attached divisional artillery, together with its own heavy artillery, trains, and other units.

The artillery preceded the infantry by a little. On February 5 all units first to enter the battery positions were there, the guns having been put in place the night previous. On the same date Division Headquarters was opened in the château at Couvrelles, in the Aisne valley, east of Soissons. Undamaged in spite of German occupancy, with the swans still in the moat, and the gardener at work, its state presented a marked contrast to that of the country-seat of the Prince de Monaco, a few miles away, at Pinon. Here a blasted, shattered park, a mansion, stables, *faisanderie,* and *plaisances,* all reduced to smoke-stained ruins, afforded the Americans a vivid picture of what war had done to a part of the world's beauty. What the war was still to do was borne in upon the divisional machine-gunners daily, in the neighborhood of that same estate; if they tried to draw water from the château pond by daylight, how quickly did they have to dart to cover before the enemy's sniping "77s" would drop shells among them!

"The relief," in the prosaic terms of the day's operations report, "was accomplished without incident." But what drama was ever so thrilling for those new troops, as in little columns, groups, and by individuals, guided by the veteran French, they felt their way, in the black night, along the shell-torn trails and zigzag *boyaux* up toward that eerie region lighted by the white and ghostly flares! The whining, crescendo whistle and rending crash of a shell, the distant tack-a-tack-a-tack of a nervous machine gun, the crowded confusion of the narrow, muddy trenches, the final arrival in some rudely fortified quarry, half discerned in the darkness, or the descent into a fetid dugout, where the odor of death lingered, and the fat rats ran riot — to mention these first impressions, with their attendant reflexes of awe, fear, curiosity, puzzlement, weariness, resolution, is merely to chronicle some of the influences which went to make soldiers out of lads-in-khaki.

The troops entered the line, at the outset, in small numbers. A platoon of each infantry regiment took over a little stretch of a sub-sector, with French to right and left; a portion of a battery or a machine-gun company relieved a corresponding French section or two. A little later, as the Americans learned the routine and proved dependable, the original platoon front was enlarged to a company front; a whole battery took over the position and duties of a French unit. Later still, the Division was allowed further responsibility, whole battalions and regiments taking over their appropriate subdivisions of the general line.

But before this ideal of every unit commander could be realized, before the Major or the Colonel could be happy in the prideful thought that the defense of a part of the real battle line was his own, undivided responsibility, there was much for him still to learn, much for him to teach his men. Previous training had inculcated general principles. Now was to begin a training from a book writ large on the scarred and battered land, where the punctuation was furnished by enemy shells, and comment by the whine of machine-gun bullets or sigh of the gas shells. The multiple duties connected with the repair, improvement, and extension of the defensive works (trench, wire, gas protection, shelters) — how best to get supplies forward over the shelled roads — methods of observing the enemy and getting information about him — the practice of artillery and machine-gun fire, in all their aspects — the tactical disposition and employment of infantry, from outposts to the garrisons of the strong points — defense of the *ligne de surveillance* and the *ligne de résistance principale* — these and a dozen other subjects were made a matter of continuous study by officers of all grades, section leaders, and soldiers. Instruction was wholly in the hands of the French. There was assigned to the Division a flock of officers and non-commissioned officers drawn from the French divisions in the Eleventh Corps; and these were distributed among all units down to including a platoon of infantry or a section of artillery and machine-gunners. Tirelessly they taught the newcomers all they knew of the grim trade; watchfully they observed all that the apprentice Americans did and were, from calculating fire data to burying garbage, from cookery to colonels. For a while the commanders and staffs of the higher units practically lived at the various French headquarters. The artillery staff, for instance, was sent to the corps artillery, to be instructed in the services of information, signals, or munitions; and there it remained for nearly two weeks. It was not till February 13 that the artillery set up its own Brigade Headquarters at Crouy. Even though the artillery commander did not exercise control, it was assumed that he did so, for the purpose of experience; and there were given to him and his Staff all the problems which naturally would arise in organizing the artillery defense of the sector, the solutions being subjected to painstaking criticism by the commanders and staffs of the various French artillery headquarters. In addition every American artillery staff officer spent two days with a battery in active operation at the front. Similar advantages were given to officers of the infantry, machine-gun, and medical units. The ammunition train was attached to the corps artillery park, whose commanding officer, Major de Bacquencourt, was tireless in his instruction. And so, interspersed between experienced French units, living with the French in closest intimacy, it was inevitable that the American troops should learn rapidly and well.

To this new duty they brought qualities and attributes which interested their teachers vastly. Their recklessness, their ignorance of danger, their youth, ruggedness, intelligence, and aptness, were all wonderful in the eyes of the dogged but very weary *poilus.* Their still imperfect discipline, their carelessness with property, their often slovenly dress and bearing, all gave grounds for a certain apprehension. But their rifles were clean; the spirit of the men was aggressive; and it was acknowledged, as a matter of course, that time would bring about a gradual change in the direction of smartness, improved courtesy, and discipline. That these newcomers were fighting men was evident from the outset. They were compared to the Canadians or Australians.

On the other side the impressions which the Americans got of their French associates were equally varied. French meticulousness of method, infinite care for detail, slowness in accomplishing a stint of work, were incomprehensible to the more rough-and-ready Yankee, even while he admired French thoroughness, tenacity, and good cooking. It was evident that there were few points in the game of war that Jacques Bonhomme did not know; but the American felt that, somehow, when his turn came to play, he would go at the game a little differently. It is of importance, however, that the men of the Twenty-Sixth never felt or assumed any air of impatience or superiority with the worn and stubborn fellows in horizon-blue — the latter were friends and companions, never "Frogs." The point is worth stressing, when one recalls the attitude, arrogant and patronizing, of many American troops, who, arriving in France at later dates, never had the honor and privilege of seeing a "Frog" in battle.

The exact extent of the line held by the Division during its stay on the Chemin des Dames is difficult to reconstitute in detail. Continuous were the changes, as subsectors, battery positions, centers of resistance, or headquarters, now occupied by the French, would be taken over in constantly increasing proportion by the Americans. In general, however, the forward battalions of the infantry, from right to left, occupied ground as follows: 101st Infantry, from where the Oise–Aisne canal entered the tunnel in the hill, at Les Vaumaires, to Filain inclusive, with regimental Headquarters in Vailly; 102d Infantry, in and about Pargny-Filain, Bois d'Entre Deux Monts, and Chavignon, with Headquarters in a quarry above Aizy; 103d Infantry, next in line, had Headquarters at Vaudesson; on the left, 104th Infantry occupied positions in Quincy Basse, Quincy Wood, with Headquarters near Vauxaillon. Near Juvigny was the Headquarters of the 52d Infantry Brigade. The 101st Machine-Gun Battalion had its posts mainly in Pinon Wood; 101st Engineers, with Headquarters at Missy, could be found at work, in detachments, all over the area. The artillery was disposed along the reverse slopes and in the glens of the southern side of the principal plateau; the brigade machine-gun battalions were interspersed with the infantry units.

If accurate plotting of the positions held by all units presents some difficulty, so it is hard to record the dates which mark the periods of duty in line of all troops of the Division. But certain initial dates appear exceedingly interesting to note with care, since they are part of the history, not only of this Division, but also of he whole Expeditionary Force. Thus:

The first shot from troops of the National Guard or National Army against the Germans was fired on February 5, 1918, by Number One piece, Battery "A," 101st Field Artillery, at 3.45 P.M. The shell case was forwarded to the Massachusetts state authorities, for permanent preservation.

The first infantry units of the National Guard or National Army to take a position on the front line was a platoon of the 101st Infantry (Massachusetts), on the night of February 7–8.

The first death from hostile fire in the Division occurred on February 14, 1918 — Private Ralph R. Spaulding, 103d Infantry.

The first German prisoner taken by troops of the National Guard or National Army was secured on the night of February 14–15.

A few days sufficed to accustom the troops to trench routine. They persisted in exposing themselves, their eager curiosity running ahead of their discretion. It would have been obvious to a far less watchful enemy than the one who crouched along the hillsides north of the Ailette, that he had new troops opposite him. A shell from the German batteries had the effect merely of bringing together a group of the Americans on the run, "to see where she landed." It was not till sniping artillery and riflemen had taken toll of some of the careless ones that they learned to keep out of sight between dawn and dusk. But they learned how to occupy a trench or a machine-gun post promptly and well; the gunners won golden opinions; the supply and medical services functioned in a manner which was more than satisfactory; the military police already had won a reputation for intelligence and efficiency. In a week's time, indeed, the French were ready to commence a series of lessons in the more advanced chapters of trench lore and trench warfare.

First to come was experience in patrolling, building wire entanglements and other works, intelligence and liaison duty. Then, on February 14, arrangements were made for a patrol which should have some of the characteristics of a small raid on a limited objective. The mission was to reconnoiter some new work which the enemy had been doing opposite the lines of the 104th Infantry, but not to attempt a passage of the German wire. It was a little enterprise identical with scores of others along the front that night; it would be not worth noting were it not for the fact that, for the Division, the affair was a first close encounter with the enemy. For the twenty men selected from the 104th Infantry to go on the expedition, how much the night held of mystery, anxiety, and exultation! When volunteers had been asked for, a whole company responded — which was in itself a satisfaction. Lieutenant (later Major) J. W. Brown was in command, but the American party as a whole acted under the orders of a French lieutenant, who, with twenty of his own men, was to direct the newcomers.

Taking the prescribed formation, equipped with rifles, grenades, and pistols (though the French inclined to disfavor the rifle on raiding parties), the group made its way across the flat valley cautiously; it reached the German wire without any untoward adventures, in spite of the flares that lighted up the marshy waste of No Man's Land in their ghostly fashion; the men completed their reconnaissance without interference, and then, on signal from their French leader, commenced the return trip. They had not gone far, however, creeping over the shell craters, before they were brought to an abrupt halt. An unexpected sight had caught the eyes of the advanced group — a glimpse of figures moving along the dim sky-line between themselves and their own lines. Taking position in shell holes, they awaited developments, ready for action, uncertain what to expect. But only for an instant were they left in doubt, for, with a crackle and flash, the enemy rifles opened on them briskly. Instantly the fire was returned. Broken up into small groups in the darkness and because of the torn-up ground, the Americans sought none the less to come to grips with their opponents, employing their pistols and grenades, while the French also moved up, firing at the flashes. For a half-hour the duel continued, when the Germans suddenly drew off in the darkness. Advancing, the raiding party found a wounded man, abandoned, together with a quantity of equipment; and so, carrying their prisoner, who died soon after being brought in, Brown's men reached their lines in safety, only to find, at roll-call, that Sergeant L. Letzing and eight soldiers were missing. Daylight was at hand. To be caught between the lines after dawn meant probable death; but Brown did not hesitate for an instant. Hardly had the absence of his men been verified before he was out again, crawling to the scene of the skirmish, to recover them. Fired on by enemy machine guns he persisted in his search, but in vain. He was on the point of regretfully abandoning his quest, when quite by chance his eyes were attracted to the movement of a little group crawling from one shell crater to another, toward our lines; and he guessed that Letzing had found his way to safety after all. This, indeed, proved to be the case. Separating in the darkness from the rest of the patrol during the return journey, Letzing perceived a German just disappearing in the gloom, pursued him promptly, came to grips, and made the fellow a prisoner. A moment later the white light of a flare showed him a group of Americans near by, lost like himself; and so, taking command of the party, he led it with commendable skill to a safe return, fetching in his prisoner. For their behavior on this occasion, Brown and Letzing were awarded the Croix de Guerre the following day, being thus the first men of the Division to receive that decoration.

Four nights later (February 18–19) the Germans attempted their first raid on the American lines, doubtless for the purpose of securing prisoners. By this means they would identify the troops in the unfamiliar uniforms whom they had noticed in the sector for the week past. At a distance, to judge from their saucer-like helmets and olive-brown clothing, they might have been British — and what were British units doing so far from the Flanders front? Or were newly arrived Americans actually taking a place on the line, troops other than the First Division, which had been identified through prisoners taken the November previous? An effort to solve these questions on the part of the enemy had been expected by the French any night.

When it came, the effort was developed along lines which were to become familiar enough to the Twenty-Sixth. A preliminary bombardment of the portion of the lines to be raided, with object to drive the occupants to cover, stunned and disordered, was increased in intensity up to the moment the raiding party moved forward; and the attackers were covered, as they advanced, by a moving curtain of artillery fire, which was finally to box in the survivors of the preliminary bombardment, prevent their reinforcement, and make their capture easier.

The line chosen for attack was held by units of the 104th Infantry (western Massachusetts) — Company "D" and the regiment's machine-gunners; but, however eagerly the attack was delivered, nothing was accomplished against these troops, so new that this was their very first night in the fire trenches. The artillery, on signal, laid down an effective barrier; and the infantry, unterrified by the enemy's bombardment, made such effective use of their rifles and machine guns that the German advance was stopped short. Patrols, sent out immediately upon the enemy's withdrawal, found eloquent testimony of the Americans' good shooting in the numerous dead and wounded which the Germans had not been able to carry away.

Compliments quickly followed from the French. The behavior of his men under fire for the first time might well have encouraged the Division Commander, who had always believed so fervently in the quality of the troops under him. He telegraphed an account of the action to General Headquarters which glowed. He intimated in the same message that, so content were the French with the work of the Americans, that there was every likelihood of the Division's being allowed to take over more of the front than had been originally intended. The answer was chilling, indeed. General Headquarters admonished that there must be no deviation from the plan of training already laid down, and that, in addition, one must not write telegrams which dealt with more than one subject! The great gulf between the spirit animating one message and the other was deep, indeed — here, the generous enthusiasm of a field commander for the good behavior of his lads in action; there, utterly praiseworthy resolve of the "brains of the army" not to deviate a hair's breadth, for any reason, from the path to efficiency and the way of good order, as blazed by the T.S.G.S. So slight an incident as this, however, was not to be without significance in the development of relations between those principally concerned, so delicate are some of the adjustments of the very human machine that makes war.

A few days later the Germans' attentions were repaid in kind. It was discovered that certain of their observation posts were located on the far side of the Ailette stream, close to the bank, not far from where the parallel Oise-Aisne canal branched off to the southeast, to enter the tunnel east of Filain. It was decided to reconnoiter and destroy them, at the same time making prisoners, after effecting a crossing of the canal by means of portable foot-bridges. The raiding party was much stronger than on the first occasion, being composed of some twenty-six men from Companies "E" and "H," 101st Infantry, under Lieutenants W. L. Koob and G. H. Davis, accompanying a force of eighty men from the 64th Infantry (French) and a detachment of French engineers. Divided into two groups, protected by the dense and well-sustained barrage of the American artillery and machine guns, the raiders penetrated the German lines after the engineers had coolly overcome some resistance to their efforts to lay their bridges. They bombed dugouts, inflicted losses, and returned without a scratch (so far as the Americans were concerned), fetching prisoners with them. Noteworthy in this affair were the facts that for the first time, so far as is known, American artillery fired a rolling and a box barrage to cover an infantry advance, while a machine-gun battalion laid down a box barrage, employing indirect fire.[1]

It was next the turn of the Connecticut regiment (102d Infantry) to get involved, and, while the affair resulted in one sense less happily than had the others, it demonstrated anew various things about these troops which were of the utmost importance to ascertain and prove. The 28th was the night of a battalion relief; the second detachment of this regiment to enter the line was just going to its designated position. At the same hour a working party from Company "A" of the same regiment, under the command of Lieutenant R. Bishop, comprising thirty-two men, proceeded in the direction of the canal from the ruined village of Chavignon, to build entanglements, each man carrying a roll of barbed wire. Hardly had this party started work, however, spread out over a hundred yards of ground, with French detachments guarding its flanks, when suddenly down dropped an enemy barrage fire, directly on them. The French drew back at once; but Bishop, having received no orders to that effect, assumed that he was expected to hold his ground — and did so, organizing a kind of defense from the shell craters in which he had grouped his small army.

But close behind the moving barrier came the enemy. Before Bishop could dispose his men there stormed over two large parties of German infantry, overcoming or ignoring the resistance of the little working party without a pause in their stride. Gathering up some ten or eleven of Bishop's men the Germans swept past the remainder of the party in the darkness, making for the sandbagged breastworks of the Chavignon ravine. Here the new battalion (2d Battalion, 102d Infantry) was waiting for them, just arrived in the unfamiliar trenches, under fire for the first time. And the Germans could not reach them. They were stopped dead. The Americans used their rifles, then their grenades — and when these gave out, they hurled stones at their assailants; by every kind of means, they beat back the raiders before these latter got to the wire entanglements before the trenches, and there a number of the Germans were found hanging next morning, dead. Retiring, the raiders were again covered by their own protective artillery fire; to cut them off the American batteries laid down a curtain between the lines. And through this double rain of shell did Lieutenant Bishop come and go three times, accompanied by two enlisted men, searching for his wounded and missing.

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[1] 51st Field Artillery Brigade; 101st Machine-Gun Battalion.

Prisoners were lost, which was unfortunate, since their capture would identify the Division. But of incomparable worth was the assurance that a new set of newcomers, in their baptism of fire, were steady and fierce in the defense of their positions. Once more was the fighting quality of these New England fellows firmly established. This was a small affair, but it had an importance out of all proportion to its dimensions. Like the little affairs in the Bois Quincy and at Albia, across the canal, it helped teach war. All were blows of the hammer on the red-hot iron, shaping it, giving temper to the rough-cast metal.

One week later a detachment of the same regiment undertook a raid, in conjunction with the French, of a character precisely like its predecessors. But this time the French artillery support was not effective, owing to a misunderstanding as to the time-table; it was not possible to lay the foot-bridges across the canal near the reservoir, as had been planned, owing to machine-gun fire; and the party was forced to return without having accomplished its mission.

For some days after these exchanges of courtesies the sector was quiet. Only the daily harassing fire of the artillery of both sides broke the calm. But the troops were soon to undergo an uninvited experience which was painful and costly, even though it possessed, like all hard lessons, a value as a bit of education. On March 16, at 6.30 o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy suddenly loosed a storm of gas shells, mainly directed on the area occupied by the 102d Infantry in Pargny-Filain and the quarries above Aizy and Jouy such as the so-called "Pantheon," on the battery positions, and over part of the area, to the right, occupied by the 101st Infantry. For a full twenty-four hours, the choking, burning, poisonous rain descended without a respite. All varieties of gas — mustard, phosgene, hyperite — were employed, and the use of a new arsenical preparation was suspected, with a mingling of ordinary high-explosive. And the troops suffered. The gas defense of the sector, like its other accessory defenses, had been neglected by the French; nor had the energetic and constant work of the Americans quite sufficed to assure, in all places, the protection of dugouts and shelters, by means of the approved blanket curtains, ventilator stops, and vermorel spraying. As a consequence the deadly fumes, loosed over the area in vast volumes, seeped quickly into many of the pockets and excavations used for company kitchens or assembly points in the forward areas. Gas masks were used, of course; but cases occurred where men, half suffocated and choked by having worn their masks for hours, believing the danger to be past, would remove the respirator for a breath of air, only to inhale a whiff that seared their lungs or scorched their eyeballs. Brave fellows such as runners or signal agents, tearing off their masks to see better, fell victims to the deadly fog. Many received bad surface burns from accidental contact with clothing, tools, or equipment, which had been exposed to the gas; the high-explosive shells, moreover, took toll of not a few wounded.

The character of the bombardment gave the authorities much occasion for thought. Some 20,000 gas shells were estimated by the Corps gas officer to have been directed on the area occupied mainly by one regiment in twenty-four hours — an intense and protracted bombardment — which gave the attack a certain novelty of design and scope which was puzzling. In retrospect it suggests the form of preparation for attack, or one aspect of it, which the Germans employed with such success against the British three days later at the inception of their tremendous drive in Flanders. But in this case no gas was thrown on the back areas nor was the attack followed up. The German infantry made no move whatever. It is possible that their plans were slightly altered by the violent counter-battery work of our own artillery, which gave back to the enemy his own measure of gas heaped up and running over throughout the anxious, painful day.

Anxious the day was, too, to the French High Command, which was aware of the great German effort in preparation — the "*Kaiserschlacht,*" the "battle without a morrow" — but was still in doubt as to where on the western battle front the blow would fall. The continuous demands to be kept constantly informed of every phase of the enemy's activity, the minute care with which the development of every slowly dragging hour was analyzed and studied, were intimation enough of the concern felt over the somewhat unusual phenomenon of the gas bombardment — granting that it might have some other motive than the intimidation and dismay of the new American troops. Anxious the day was also for the brigade and regimental commanders, since here was the first extensive test of their troops' discipline under gas, the first test of their own success in providing for the instruction and drill of their units in gas defense. But while the casualties were considerable, the examination and analysis of all the reports showed that death and disablement resulted either from an occasional deliberate disobedience of explicit orders by individual soldiers who neglected to put their masks on when so directed, from a few who neglected precautions in order to work faster and better on signal wires or in runners' relays, or from accidental body burns against which there was practically no protection possible. And, like many another mishap in war, this first enemy gas concentration, with its resultant casualties, taught to the still careless troops a stern, hard lesson of caution and obedience.

With the events of Saint Patrick's Day ended the experiences of the Division in its first sector. The time had come for its relief. Originally, its stay on the Chemin des Dames was scheduled to terminate March 7; but now it was to move out, giving place to the Twenty-First Division (French). The additional ten days of sector work had been arranged, partly to satisfy the French (who wished the Division to make an even longer stay, for reasons of their own), and also for the sake of extending the experience of the regimental commanders in the exercise of command over a regimental sector. But, in the opinion of the best qualified judges, the tour of instruction had lasted quite long enough. The troops had acquired experience in combat; officers had absorbed all the instruction possible regarding the warfare of position; all ranks had taken part in patrols and work; had learned about information and signal duty, supply service, forms of reports, observation of the enemy, the methods of making a relief in the line, regulation of ammunition supply. Casualties had been suffered, prisoners made, attacks repulsed, raids made handsomely. Life in the front line was understood. Further, in the opinion of the regimental commanders, there existed a possible source of danger to the troops in deriving from their more experienced French associates a certain slackness regarding detail. The example of some of the seasoned old *poilus* was not always the best, good teachers though they were. There had arisen the specter of divided command, and consequent divided responsibility, which might develop into a situation fraught with peril, despite the unbroken good-will and friendship of the French and American officers "up front." And the men needed rest. They needed new clothing, shoes, additional equipment. They were weary and dirty from weeks of life in the broken-down, miry trenches and dank chalk-pits of their first sector.[1]

Casualties, strangely enough considering the lapse of time and steady, harassing fire, had been very few. Killed by hostile fire were one officer and nine enlisted men; dead by accident, two enlisted men; from disease, seven enlisted men. Some fifty-five had been wounded; some three hundred had been gassed (mainly during the attack of March 16–17). The sector had not relinquished its title as a quiet one — not yet, though another week was to see it turned into a hell indeed. Of the deaths from disease, be it noted, three occurred from cerebro-spinal meningitis, on March 5 and 6; there existed a few isolated cases of scarlet fever; scabies had a certain prevalence in some units; and so, while there was hardly enough contagious disease present in the command to give ground for any

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[1] The letter of compliment from the French Corps Commander, the first to be received by the Division, conveyed under its official phrases a very real and personal affectionate regard. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on the mutual cordiality and esteem which from the very beginning marked the relations of the Division's officers and men with their French associates. The letter follows:

Eleventh Army Corps, Staff
Headquarters, March 15, 1918

No. 9114 B-1
S.C. No. 4817
General Orders No. 7

We regret that our comrades of the Twenty-Sixth Division should leave us in order to fulfill their tasks elsewhere.

We have been able to appreciate their bravery, their sense of duty and discipline, also their frank comradeship; they carry away our unanimous regrets.

General Edwards has been pleased to consider the Eleventh Corps as godfather to the Twenty-Sixth Division. The Eleventh Corps feels proud of the awarded honor, being sure that, wherever he may be sent, the godson shall do credit to the godfather.

General DE MAUD'HUY
Commanding Eleventh Army Corps

apprehension of an epidemic, the fact had weight, certainly, in deciding General Headquarters to order the relief of the Division on March 18.

Within three days after that date, therefore, in accordance with orders issued by the First Corps, under whose administrative command the Division operated, the relief by units of a French division was completed, and the schooling of the Twenty-Sixth on the Chemin des Dames was over.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE MARCH

NO change could have benefited the Division more than that which followed its withdrawal from the line. The inspectors of the First Corps and from General Headquarters, who had kept watch of the Division through its tour of duty, may have received an unfavorable impression of the men's physical condition, notwithstanding their uniformly excellent record as fighters. And so, if only for the purpose of effecting an improvement in the former respect, the four days' road march, directed by General Headquarters, to follow the relief of the Division from the Chemin des Dames, was an ideal arrangement. Since the movement was begun by a twenty-four hours' railroad journey (to Brienne-le-Château and Bar-sur-Aube), experience in troop handling under varying conditions was afforded the General Staff sections at Division Headquarters; an unequaled opportunity was given commanding officers, from the Division Commander down, critically to observe their men with respect to march discipline and condition. And if, as was generally understood, the Division during its march should engage in maneuver problems, there would be a chance for training and testing all officers in handling troops under conditions of open warfare.

Entraining was carried on at Braisne, a town on the Vesle River just above its junction with the Aisne, at Mercin-Pommiers, and at Soissons. Nothing remained to tell the story of that blood-stained valley to the young troops; but one can fancy their interest had it been possible to remind them of the fearful work between the British and the Germans, which marked the passage of the sluggish, marshy Vesle by the former, in the aftermath of the First Battle of the Marne, in September, 1914. Perhaps there was needed no reminder of days past to tell our men that they were still in a battle area.

The departure of the battalions was not without incident, for the enemy, perhaps advised of the American troop movement by its air service which operated in this region with little molestation, took the railway station and yards under long-range artillery fire, as also Soissons, which was subjected to severe concentrations during the time our men were moving away. No casualties resulted, but the loading and movement of the trains, especially at Soissons, was a little hampered. The conduct of the troops, under trying conditions, was admirable; and two officers, Major H. B. Estey, 101st Engineers, and Lieutenant E. G. Hopkins, 101st Ammunition Train, won the Croix de Guerre for coolness and courage under heavy fire, in rescuing some French soldiers who had been imprisoned in a burning building. A couple of days later the Division was concentrated in the vicinity of its detraining points, and the march began.

The days of the relief and the rail movement were heavy with interest. By night the horizon to the northeast was alight with the rosy glare of intense artillery fire, and in more ways than one even the man in the ranks was aware that events of more than slight importance were in progress not many miles away. But of their real magnitude he had no true conception; he was merely puzzled, intensely intrigued by the fact that suddenly his own neighborhood, quiet for so long, had wakened to the sound of the guns. On the night of March 21 indeed, the infernal fire and thunder in the distant sky of Rheims and Champagne was storming with tenfold violence at Ypres, Messines, Arras, La Bassée, and on the Somme, until, at five in the morning of the 21st — that fateful day when the enemy came close to forcing a final decision in his favor — Von Below, under cover of a heavy fog, unleashed an assault wave of thirty-seven divisions backed by uncounted artillery against the British in Picardy. More than one officer of the Division Staff, or organization commander, halted his motor-car as he sped through the silent night along the Châlons–Epernay road, to watch that northern sky, and to wonder what it might mean for him and for the lads of his command, rumbling along light-heartedly in their troop trains to Brienne. And his hope was that the Twenty-Sixth might soon come to grips with the invader, for not a lad of it but knew that he was better than the Prussian, man for man.

Brienne-le-Château, with its famous old school on the hill, where Napoleon studied and dreamed; Bar-sur-Aube, most lovely of ancient towns, were for the Division naught but detraining points. One drew up alongside the broad stone quay, usually in the chilly darkness that just precedes the dawn; one debarked sleepily the length of the long train, the sills of which were just level with the surface of the platform; one policed the "side-door Pullmans" groping for lost articles of equipment in the scanty straw, tugged and lifted at the rolling kitchens, wagons, and other horse-drawn vehicles, till they were clear, slung equipment and rifle, wondered when the next meal would be forthcoming, and marched away in column up the road out of town under the weight of one's heavy pack. One heard excited tales of a train having been bombed by an aeroplane — wished to be in the platoon of each company designated to open on an air-raider with its rifles, if attacked *en route* — was glad that the weather was clear — enjoyed seeing not only the majors, but the brigade and regimental commanders, tramping along with a full kit, just like so many buck privates.[1] Easterly, along smooth roads, through a smiling farm country of rolling plains and little, clean rivers, with patches of ancient woodland, with nowhere a sign of war and everywhere the signs of tender spring, past sleepy little towns of venerable age — Doulevant-le-Château, Soulaines, Andelot, Vignory, Joinville-sur-Marne, making daily marches of no more than comfortable length, the column marched, with spirits ever rising as cramped muscles got stretched and the warm sun sent down its blessing. It was a good war, just then, grinned the cheerful soldiers.

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[1] Brigadier-General Peter E. Traub, commanding 51st Infantry Brigade, required all officers to make the march afoot, and himself set the example.

Faults of march discipline developed early, as was to be expected. There was some straggling by individual incorrigibles. The duty of staying in ranks with one's platoon under all conditions — perhaps the duty hammered with most difficulty into all parts of the Expeditionary Force — had not yet been learned by the Division's men. Not till months later did they catch the idea. It seemed a small thing to slip away, just for an instant, as the column passed through a village, to buy something to eat or drink, to say how-d'ye-do to the brown eyes that smiled from a doorway; it seemed very easy to catch up with the column at the next halt; it was hard to keep up when one's shoes hurt and the pack was sagging — one would be there when the fighting began all right, but this tramping along the road — nothing to it! So whispered the tempter to the young, still ignorant soldier. And hence a provost guard, quick of eye and firm of grip, was needed, to march at the tail of some battalions. Very difficult to check — that tendency to independent action of the American soldier, often valuable in an emergency, often disastrous to the coherence and strength of the unit. If it could be proved that it impaired his value as a fighting man, it would be easier to subdue the weakness; but that many a straggler on the march was quickest to get into action, and longest to stay when the columns deployed into line of skirmishers, was certainly the case. "A fighting man — yes," is the answer; "but there is a difference between a fighting man and a disciplined soldier; and it is the latter who is needed to win battles."

All the incidents of the march were of the greatest value in point of training. Billeting methods; the dispatch of an officer and detachment in advance of the battalion to apportion quarters in the halting-place for the night; the arrival after dark, and consequent search for the designated lofts and garrets, horse lines, wagon parks, headquarters, officers' messes, place for the kitchens; posting the guard; the departure in the frosty morning, with an officer left behind at the *mairie* to receive claims of the inhabitants for damages done by the troops (such remarkable claims!) — all these were new experiences; but they had become part of the daily routine in the life of each battalion before the march was over. And what work for the Division Staff, trying to remember, as it drafted the daily march orders under assumed conditions of war, all the wisdom of the Staff Manual regarding road spaces, traffic control, billeting spaces, location for railhead and distributing points! What a day was that when for hours the supply train was apparently lost for good, while the regimental supply officers and their details waited at the designated place, in vain, for their rations and forage!

The Division Commander lived in his motor-car, tirelessly, up and down the columns, a watchful eye out for every failing, for every point of improvement in the lads he had come to trust and love, for whose reputation he was so loyally jealous. The overloaded packs are hung too low; some of the men carry extra shoes, contrary to orders; overcoats are rolled and slung in accordance with individual fancy; slackers are stealing rides on the wagons and rolling kitchens; horses and mules are not packed uniformly; too slow a march cadence is being maintained; columns are not always hugging the right side of the road; proper distance is not observed. And all these breaches of discipline or deficiencies of instruction, unit commanders were directed by the Commanding General to remedy, "by correcting derelictions on the spot." [1]

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[1] Memorandum. Headquarters Twenty-Sixth Division, 25 March, 1918.

Officers from the Corps and from General Headquarters, who were present during the march from day to day to note the Division's condition from all angles, appeared generally content. Not that the battalions were thoroughly disciplined yet — for that was not the case. There remained also the problem of instilling the spirit of personal responsibility. There was too much carelessness and waste in handling equipment and property. One saw, too, about this time, the beginning of the feeling, common to the majority of American combat units, that only officers and men on the ground could accurately estimate conditions and regulate conduct accordingly. The conviction never quite died out in the line organizations that the Staffs were lacking in good sense; while the Staffs, preparing plans with the utmost care and full knowledge of wider conditions — plans for the comfort as well as the efficiency of the troops — would bitterly complain (often with justice) that their plans came to naught, and the men consequently suffered through an organization commander's habit of independent judgment. Not that any differences existed, in the Twenty-Sixth Division at least, regarding matters of importance. That was far from the case. In battle, and in times of stress, the coöperation of the Staff and the line was admirable. But there were differences over minor matters. One recalls, for example, an order respecting reserve rations, which issued while the Division was in sector. The order required that the men should carry the prescribed reserve ration at all times with them in the pack — the idea being that, in case of an attack, or other circumstances that might result in isolating the soldier for a while, he would have some food with him, a surely thoughtful and provident idea. But it happened that the containers of the reserve ration were of material easily wet through and easily got at by the rats, or else were so bulky that they were exceedingly difficult to pack in any part of the equipment. Consequently, company commanders believed they were complying with the order if they arranged to have reserve rations stored under guard in the kitchen or other central location, easily accessible for all their men when needed. A procedure which utterly annulled the usefulness of the order — which was, as we have seen, the expression of an entirely sound military idea; and a deadlock resulted which took time to resolve. Thus, again, on this march, the colonel or major, directed sharply to take measures to stop straggling, felt that his general in a moment of impatience had overlooked the fact that some of the laggard lads were reputed to be delayed gas cases (!) just beginning to develop, or plaintive sufferers from "trench feet"; he detailed his provost guard, as ordered, but in sorrow that so ruthless an order should issue from so enlightened a commander. Officers of the Corps or from General Headquarters, present with the Division, desirous of asserting a proper authority, zealous to hasten the Division's efficiency, perhaps made caustic comments on what they believed was a lack of discipline should one of their impeccable plans miscarry; whereupon the Division tended, outraged that its excellence should be even lightly called in question, to request that actual conditions be ascertained before conclusions were drawn and comments made. At no time, probably, did any American Staff enjoy the authority of the French — perhaps did not deserve to; certainly, in the earlier stages of the development of the Twenty-Sixth and all other American divisions, the Staffs were made to demonstrate their practical efficiency before being accepted as either guides or managers. But it equally is the case that, with time, fuller knowledge, and a more perfectly defined interdependence, the Staff and line, of the Twenty-Sixth, at least, came to work effectively together for the common good.

Four or five days of marching through a countryside unscarred by war — a multitude of minor happenings, grave and gay, which all went to education — and the Division found itself between the Marne and Gondrecourt, in a training area which touched the western boundary of that which they had inhabited all winter. The maneuver was abandoned. It had been planned to arrange an encounter action with the Forty-Second Division, the Twenty-Sixth opposing a resistance to an enemy approaching the line of the Marne. The march, indeed, with respect to its routes and daily distances, had been planned to effect the proper concentrations for this purpose; the intelligence officers and the regimental commanders had gone forward to reconnoiter defensive positions and to gain information of the "enemy." But presently it appeared that other considerations than the benefits of a maneuver problem must prevail. The troops went into billets in villages roundabout Grand and Reynel, in which latter town Division Headquarters was established on March 26. All through the regiments slipped the rumor that they were in for a period of rest and refitting. Rest was the order of the day. But at more than one headquarters it was felt that the leisure period was not to be for long.

Two happenings which occurred upon arrival in the new area had their importance as being the first of a series. Toward the conclusion of the stay on the Chemin des Dames orders were received by each regimental and separate battalion commander to select a number of officers and non-commissioned officers for return to the United States as instructors in the training-camps — men who had had the benefit of a course at Gondrecourt or some specialists' school, as well as front-line experience, and who were otherwise qualified by good records and personal character to carry weight with the new battalions forming at home. Did ever an order produce, in those called to obey it, more contradictory emotions? Since one wishes to paint in full color the life and soul of the Division, as representative of those first in France, it is worth while to pause, in the actual chronicle of events, to take note of this or that happening, rumor, belief, emotion even, which brightened or shaded some moment of the Division's experience. So with this order to send men home. Fancy the state of mind of the unit commander. On the one hand, he had toiled for months to train and discipline his troops, and for this purpose he had leaned heavily on his lieutenants and sergeants working away with their platoons till each little group seemed dependent for its life and value, in large measure, on the personality of its energetic leader. And now the work of these invaluable assistants would have to be done all over again. For a moment it seemed as if one were directed to sacrifice a unit's strength almost in the presence of the enemy. Already, during the training period, good men had been lost. They had been taken to recruit the permanent officer personnel at schools, or headquarters, or services. The colonel saw his regiment's value seriously compromised, at a critical time, by this latest order, and he mourned bitterly. Then, on the other hand, perhaps he perceived that, after all, the greater interest must always prevail; perhaps he learned that lesson of sacrifice of self which every commander has borne in upon him sooner or later. Doubtless, too, in spite of the loss to his command, he was glad of an opportunity to reward the good services of some officer or sergeant by the gift of a journey home, where promotion was promised. At any rate, here was an order; and it must be carried out. And so during the last week of march, the draft of home-going officers and section leaders was completed, and the Division, for the moment, felt so much the poorer.

But the remedy for the hurt was already at hand. Hardly had the trucks rumbled away with the homeward-bound before there arrived a large contingent of replacement officers. From many sources they were derived — training-camps in the United States, schools in France.

Of various antecedents, they ranged from grizzled former non-commissioned officers of the old Regular Army to spirited young college lads of only three months' training, but quick intelligence and high ideals; from those who sought to avoid the unpleasantness of being drafted as privates by obtaining a lieutenant's commission *via* the quick route of a training-camp, to those who had volunteered for service from motives of purest patriotism. Welcome, indeed, they were to prove in the weeks that followed. Happy would the Division have been had the replacement system ever been able, later, to furnish it with drafts as promptly as on this first occasion.

CHAPTER VII

THE LA REINE (BOUCQ) SECTOR

IF all dreams are notoriously unsubstantial, the soldier's dream of rest, when in the field, is less than gossamer. Forty-eight hours after arrival in the Rimaucourt training-area, upon the conclusion of its five days' march, the Twenty-Sixth was on its way to more duty on the firing-line.

Properly to understand this abrupt change of plan, it will be advantageous to survey summarily the general situation on the Western Front during the last week of March. While the Twenty-Sixth was quietly proceeding to its training-area, the long-anticipated storm had broken in all its concentrated fury. The enemy was dealing blows as from a battering-ram against the lines in Picardy. On March 21, while feints in the vicinity of Arras, Ypres, and Rheims had the effect of pinning the Allied troops in those regions in their places, he attacked at dawn, on a fifty-mile front, from Croisilles to Vendeuil, between the rivers Scarpe and Oise, along the line of the British Third and Fifth Armies. And by noon of that desperate day he had penetrated to the second and third line of defense in more than one locality.[1] Shrewdly taking advantage of ideal weather conditions to effect a complete surprise — for a heavy two days' fog masked his concentration and approach and rendered impotent the British observation and long-range artillery fire — he poured in divisions in prodigal strength, each hour and day widening the walls of the initial salients and driving deeper. Hopelessly out-numbered, surprised, with prepared defenses only in the two forward zones, the British were driven in at vital points. The gallant resistance of isolated units could avail nothing against the relentless pressure, the furious assaults, and the brilliantly employed new tactics of the Germans, led by some of the greatest field commanders of the war.[1] Conceived by the genius of Von Ludendorff, taught sedulously on the quiescent Russian front in 1917, the new tactics had been used for the first time to assist in accomplishing the disastrous defeat of the Italians in October of that year, between Caporetto and the Piave. Dependent for their success upon high training and perfect coördination between all infantry utilities and the artillery, Ludendorff's methods of attack, afterwards named "infiltration," required the use of very superior troops. And these he had. Two days of sustained attacks, though Von Below was a little behind his schedule, had accomplished for the enemy a resounding success. He had driven a broad wedge between the two British armies to a depth of nine miles; his opponents were in disorderly retirement; he claimed to have captured 400 guns and 25,000 prisoners. As if to announce his victory he opened fire that day on Paris, from a distance of nearly seventy miles, with the battery of 8.4-inch guns, afterwards christened derisively "Big Berthas." Vainly did two French divisions of infantry and one of cavalry, hastily summoned to stiffen the British, strive to stem the onward rush. The next day the Germans forced the crossings of the Somme, the British Third Army falling back in confusion; on the 25th the line of the river south of Péronne was taken; Noyon and Nesle were captured; by evening the Germans appeared to have every prospect of separating not only the two British armies, but also of effecting a breach between the British and the French, in the vicinity of Roye. It was a time of the gravest peril to the Allied arms. If the Germans could capture Montdidier, with its vital railway and road center, they could probably prevent, or certainly hinder, the advance of the French reserves from the south; and to this purpose the enemy bent his greatest efforts. On this day Marshal Foch was appointed to the supreme command. On this day, also, American engineers employed in railroad construction were gathered up as part of a scratch force to help block the road to Amiens — the sole available reserves in the region, and they fought manfully.[1] The next few hours brought no reassurance. Still wider grew the gap between the two British armies; and the enemy showed great skill in finding lesser gaps in the line, of which he took full advantage. Time and again British rear-guard detachments had to fight their way through German parties who, slipping through every opening, were in their rear before they knew it. Lassigny fell to Von Hutier; on March 28 the Germans were in position for a direct attack on all-important Amiens and the heights of the Avre, possession of which would go far toward a complete realization of the general strategic plan. Could he cut the Paris–Amiens line, either at Montdidier, or better still by obtaining possession of Amiens itself, whose heights dominated all rail connections between the French and British, Von Hutier could hold the Allies apart and beat the reeling British in detail. Time was the important element. He must make good his initial gains without delay or his difficulties would increase every hour as the troop trains brought the French nearer. But on March 28, a week after the opening of the gigantic struggle, the German captains seemed very like to realize their fondest hopes.

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[1] German forces engaged in the initial stages of the great attack were the XVII Army (Von Below), of five corps or twenty-three divisions; II Army (Von der Marwitz), of identical strength; XVIII Army (Von Hutier), of four corps. A part of the VII Army (Von Boehn) was also engaged.

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[1] Some evidence of the weight of the attack may be gathered from the fact that in the initial wave of assault alone there were employed no less than thirty-seven divisions. In all, on March 21, some sixty-four German divisions took part in the battle, a number exceeding the total number of British divisions in France on that date.

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[1] A battalion of United States Engineers were also engaged on March 28, on the Avre.

To meet this imminent peril Marshal Foch was collecting troops from every source as a "mass of maneuver" — available for use in any part of the battle-field. The First Division (U.S.) was summoned to the active battle front from the sector it had been occupying. And that is why the Twenty-Sixth did not enjoy its hoped-for rest, but went straight back to work, as its brothers of the First were hurried to a task which was to prove stern indeed. Its friends of the Forty-Second Division, at this same time, were placed in the Baccarat Sector, northeast of Nancy, relieving a French division for duty in the west.[1]

The part of the line which the Division was about to enter was an interesting one. At the risk of again diverging momentarily from the chronicle of events, it may be well to consider the principal characteristics of the terrain, and the main points in the history of the contest which had left the enemy in possession of the so-called Saint-Mihiel salient. For it was on the southeasterly face of this famous triangle that the Twenty-Sixth was posted at this time.

Like all salients this was the relic of an unsuccessful offensive. In 1914, at the time of the general German advance which was checked definitely at the First Battle of the Marne, the plan of the invaders had included an enveloping movement by way of the Heights of the Meuse. Following an advance across the plain of the Woevre, between Pont-à-Mousson and Verdun, it was intended to pierce the line of the Toul–Verdun barrier forts which covered the Meuse line on the east, and effect a junction with the forces (under the Imperial Crown Prince) operating in the vicinity of Vienne, Varennes, and Sainte-Ménehould. But the movement was not pressed to its conclusion. The eastern crests of the Heights of the Meuse about Combres, Les Eparges, Hattonchâtel, and the Gap of Spada were secured; a murderous thrust was made at Fort Troyon, midway of the Toul–Verdun line, but was not followed up. By occupying Camp des Romains, a strong bridgehead was created at Saint-Mihiel on the Meuse, and thence the German line stretched away northeasterly, past the forest land of Apremont, and along the valley of the Rupt de Mad, to a point on the Moselle north of Pont-à-Mousson. Deficient in interior communications, the salient still served a useful purpose offensively, by erecting a perpetual threat to Verdun in reverse and greatly hampering communication to that fortress and entrenched camp (by securing the Meuse, the Meuse canal, and the Saint-Mihiel–Verdun railway). It also threatened Toul and hence the whole right of the Allied line. Defensively the salient was of value to the Germans, in that it assisted in covering Metz, the Briey iron mines, and the important Montmédy–Mézières line of rail communications.

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[1] The *communiqués* of the Commander-in-Chief to the War Department on these movements read:

"*March* 27, 1918. Twenty-Sixth and Forty-Second divisions, which have just completed a month's tour at the front, are being returned to the trenches to assist in present emergency. . . . This puts all four combat divisions now here in the line."

"*March* 28, 1918. Have made all our resources available and our divisions will be used if and when needed. Twenty-Sixth and Forty-Second are to relieve French divisions in Lorraine."

Some effort was made by the French to reduce the salient in the spring of 1915. Just prior to the Artois offensive, they attacked under appalling conditions of weather and terrain, at the heights of Les Eparges and Combres. After terrible losses success was attained; the salient was threatened at its western hinge. And other attacks, launched at Flirey and Bois-le-Prêtre, had for their object to loosen the enemy's hold on the eastern angle. But, only locally successful, these attempts were, after all, little more than episodes in the prevailing war of attrition. A kind of stalemate followed them. Neither side attempted anything more serious than local raids for months previous to the entrance of the Americans on the scene, which occurred early in 1918.[1] One of those tacit truces had prevailed — a strange but no uncommon happening along the front, at different times and places. Troops in need of a rest or refitting were sent in by both sides as garrisons of the salient; the defenses were not well kept up; a considerable proportion of the artillery was composed of "pieces of position" — guns of old or obsolescent pattern, not suitable for use in sectors where heavy fighting was to be expected.

The general character of the sector taken over by the Twenty-Sixth was in marked contrast with that of the Chemin des Dames. Its principal tactical feature was an east-west ridge, with gentle slopes toward the valley of the little Rupt de Mad, extending from Apremont, at the foot of the Heights of the Meuse, to the vicinity of Flirey. Along this ridge ran an important lateral highway. The front line was pivoted on the villages of Xivray-Marvoisin and Seicheprey, and on Remières Wood, from which latter point the line was refused, to connect with the French lines in Jury Wood. On the ridge lay the villages of Rambucourt and Beaumont, both of which were connected by an excellent road system to the rear. On the extreme left, about Apremont, the line ran over high ground in the rough and ragged Bois Brulé (Burned Wood), but, generally speaking, the sector extended over gently rolling grassland, swampy in the broad hollows, with occasional large ponds — features common to all the Woevre plain. A deep ravine and a quarry, in front of Beaumont, were of tactical importance in organizing the defense of the principal line of resistance. The enemy positions lay generally along the farther (north) bank of the Rupt de Mad, through the villages of Richecourt, Lahayville, and Saint-Baussant. Extensive forest tracts, such as Sonnard Wood,

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[1] The Second Division occupied a sector near Spada, on the western side of the salient, as the First Division had taken over the sector (front of one brigade) on the southeast side, which the Twenty-Sixth was to occupy later.

Nonsard Wood, Creue Wood, and Mort Mare Wood, afforded well-concealed artillery positions and facilities for concentration of troops, secure from observation. The isolated hill of Mont Sec, standing midway of the German lines, and elevated high above the plain, gave unequaled facility for extended observation over all the American sector. Interior communications, with Thiaucourt and Vigneulles as centers, had been improved by the construction of several light railway lines. The tactical advantage lay with the enemy. Our own lines formed a number of awkward salients, difficult of defense; the front was entered by several shallow ravines which could afford cover to an attacking force, while, as has been said, he had every advantage of observation. The trenches taken over by the Twenty-Sixth were in a very poor condition of repair; shelters were in no wise shell-proof; and the marshy character of the ground made trench drainage very difficult, notwithstanding the efforts of the First Division to effect some improvement. A new railhead, munition depots, and a road through the La Reine Forest, were under construction.

The entire length of the front taken over by the Twenty-Sixth was not less than 18,000 meters. The infantry relieved not only the single brigade which the First Division had in the line, but also a French division and regiment of infantry. Its artillery took over some "batteries of position," in addition to all the divisional artillery work of both the French and Americans there before the Twenty-Sixth arrived. For the first time an entire American division was entrusted with a divisional sector, for the Twenty-Sixth entered the La Reine Sector functioning in all its branches complete.

The relief of the First and the French division began on March 28. The Secretary of War, the Honorable Newton D. Baker, had paid a flying visit to the Division, followed by a legislative commission from Massachusetts, charged with the duty of establishing a club-room and information office for troops from that State in Paris.[1] Hardly had the visitors departed before the movement began, as orders, counter-orders, and yet further sets of instructions, both written and verbal, poured in on Division Headquarters from the French Headquarters directing the operation.

In later days the custom was established of having the Staff of the unit in sector prepare the orders and all detailed arrangements for the relief, after conference between the two commanders concerned. Higher authority simply ordered the relief to be made on a certain day, told the outgoing unit where it should proceed and how, and left the rest to the two units involved. An attempt was made to follow this method now; but the First Division's orders were not received until after the Twenty-Sixth had started its movement, in compliance with directions from the French Corps, which exercised supreme control. What followed was not an uncommon experience in the early days. When staff work was still to be perfected, when everybody was anxious to do the correct thing, yet a bit in doubt as to how to set about it; when the French politely prodded, and commanding generals worried; when lesser commanders felt that they only knew what could and should be done; when everybody felt that somebody higher up was taking notes — though possessing not a whit more practical experience — of course there was misunderstanding.

The artillery moved over the roads; the infantry was taken in French trucks to points just in rear of the sector. And it was not easy. The Division passed from the command of the First Corps (U.S.) to that of the French Thirty-Second *corps d'armée*, and this made for confusion. At Toul, Menil-la-Tour, or Royaumeix, where regimental commanders stopped on their wanderings toward the front to obtain instructions or orders, they were baffled by a flood of contradictions. The Division Staff had established an advanced echelon in Toul, to facilitate and expedite the movement of the troops; but this office, promptly reduced to bewilderment by delays in the receipt of orders and by the swift changes of plan directed by higher authority, accomplished very little. Guides did not know the way. The sole clue which one infantry regimental commander received as to the destination of his unit was obtained from the French subaltern in charge of a section of the truck train — and the latter knew no more than the place where the regiment was to disembark from the *camions*. Another infantry regiment actually completed its relief and took position on the line, without having received a definite order at all. Without appreciation of the great discomfort sure to follow, one order, issued by the operations officer detailed from the First Corps to assist in the movement, prescribed that each company's rolling kitchens should be towed behind a truck *en route*. Of course, as should have been foreseen, many of the kitchens, racked and wrenched by the rough journey, were badly damaged; and some, with frozen axles, had to be abandoned altogether. The net result was that many units had to improvise what cooking arrangements they could, for days. The whole tissue of misunderstandings and cross-purposes vividly illustrates the necessity for trained staffs, in all units from the army corps to the platoon. The Division incurred some criticism on account of the mistakes of this movement; and so did the Headquarters of the First Division, for the same reason. While responsibility rested mainly on the outgoing division, both felt that the French Headquarters was principally to blame. The reports of the inspectors supervising the movement were afterwards reproduced in a memorandum published at the Staff College, with purpose to illustrate, by the mistakes of both the First and Twenty-Sixth, some of the "things not to do" in a relief movement. It is doubtless true that much was learned of great value from this practical, hard experience; but the hardships which some of the troops were called upon to undergo, without sufficient reason, gave point to the adage that experience keeps a dear school.

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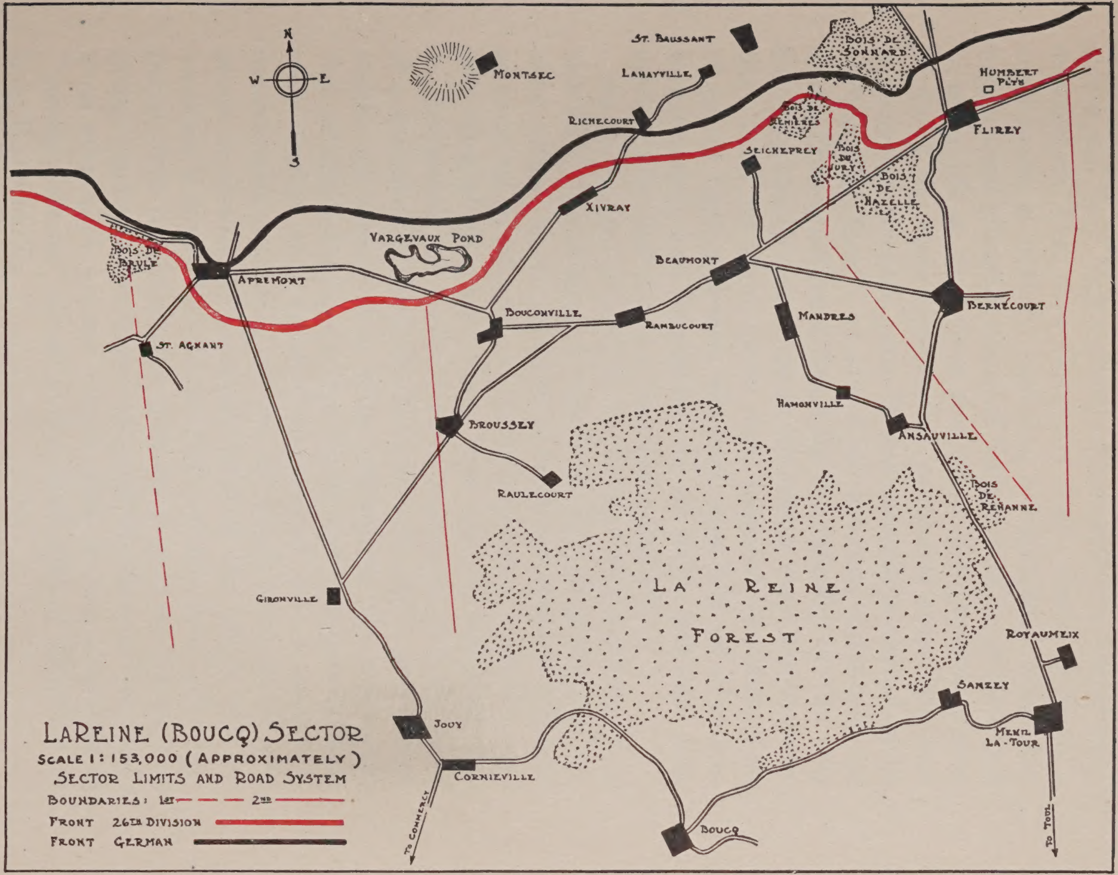
[1] Headed by the Honorable Louis Frothingham and Dr. Morton Prince, of Boston, this commission performed an admirable task in its Massachusetts club-room enterprise, through which agency the troops from that State were kept in close touch with home interests, and their welfare looked after most effectively.

Command of the sector passed to General Edwards on April 3, and Headquarters was opened at Boucq. Infantry on the line, from left to right, were: 104th in the Bois Brulé sub-sector; 101st in and about Xivray and Rambucourt; 102d in Seicheprey and Remières Wood, with Headquarters at Beaumont. On our left was a regiment of the 10th Colonial Division (French); on the right, in Jury Wood, was the 162d Regiment, the Division's old friends of the Neufchâteau area. The artillery was disposed in two groupings, east and west, the machine guns were disposed in a similar manner, each brigade's battalion being closely united with its own infantry. It was just prior to this time that a change had been made in the divisional machine-gun organization, two companies having been taken from the divisional battalion (101st) and added one to each of the brigade battalions (102d, 103d). The engineers were distributed at once through the area for work on accessory defenses; the signal battalion, in addition to detailing a platoon to each infantry regiment, began work immediately in simplifying and extending the existing telephone system. One infantry regiment (103d) was retained in reserve. The railhead and rear echelon of Division Headquarters were in Menil-la-Tour. It has been already noted that the Division became one of the units of the Thirty-Second *corps d'armée*, at the time under the command of General Passaga.

One after another the platoons moved up to the front and support positions, and took over the trench stores, munition depots, and miscellaneous front-line property — along with the duties of the sector. Two inheritances from the First Division were unexpected. The first was a large quantity of equipment and other property, in good condition, which departing units had left behind. The second odd legacy was a group of twenty American prisoners, convicted of various offenses in summary and special courts, who were working out their sentences by laboring at the upkeep of the Seicheprey trenches. In a wretched state they were. Their service records and trial papers were missing; no provision had been made for their custody, transfer, or other care; they lacked clothing and other suitable equipment. A curious addition to the strength of the Division — most informally adopted like so many foundlings — these fellows ultimately became soldiers of the Twenty-Sixth in good standing, in a rather singular fashion, as will be seen.

This was a livelier front than the Chemin des Dames. Officially designated "quiet," it was very far from deserving that name in actual experience, as even the hardy First Division was eager to testify. From the very outset all ranks were impressed with two absolute necessities — that of keeping under cover during daylight, and of observing extreme care in the matter of communications, lest information should get to the enemy, who proved, as was told by the outgoing division, to be both alert and aggressive. From his watch-towers on Mont Sec, as from his *drachen* balloons, he kept a vigilant eye on every corner of the forward area. And it needed but a hint from his observers to his "sniping batteries," hidden in the dells of Sonnard Wood, to bring a shower of shells on this or that most insignificant target. The half-hearted attentions of the enemy artillery on the Chemin des Dames had scarcely prepared the troops for this activity. It was a fact that, for days at a time, a motor-car, a group of three or four soldiers in the open, a thread of smoke from a kitchen, for instance, was nearly sure to draw fire from the "seventy-sevens," or, from what was especially dreaded, the so-



LAREINE (BOUCQ) SECTOR

SCALE 1:153,000 (APPROXIMATELY)

SECTOR LIMITS AND ROAD SYSTEM

called "Austrian eighty-eights," a gun of uncanny precision and very high velocity. Harassing fire was of daily occurrence. Out of a clear sky there would drop on a cross-roads, a battery position, a regimental headquarters in some village, a volley of thunderbolts — just enough to make life in that place somewhat of a problem. Occupants of the trenches received continual attention from snipers and machine guns. It was hazardous, indeed, to be abroad "up front" at any hour between daybreak and dusk. The casualties suffered by the infantry on the very first day the Division was in the sector went far to prove that. And by night there were frequent concentrations of gas or high-explosive, directed especially on Mandres, Rambucourt, and Beaumont. At all times our men were made aware that the war was still going on.

As they learned caution so they learned secrecy. From the First Division, and also from French sources, there were passed along amazing tales of the enemy's skill in picking up information of our movements, positions, and activities of all descriptions. Nor was the Division long in confirming the truth of these assertions. Let the relief of a battalion be ordered for a certain night, and almost surely, no matter with what precautions the movement was covered, the roads over which the troops must pass were shelled with unusual persistency. Let a wagon or ammunition train section form the habit of passing over a given cross-road at a certain hour of the night, and invariably it would have to drive for its life. Let it be whispered over the telephone that an important officer was going "up front" on inspection, and the chances were more than even that his car would have to run a gantlet of "seventy-sevens" either at the north exit of Mandres or near Bouconville.

To neutralize this danger practically all communications between units or headquarters were in code. Numerical designations, those of commanding officers, and geographical names, were all exchanged for arbitrary code designations, frequently altered. And for the wireless apparatus, for reports of casualties, and emergency, special codes of both phrases and letter combinations were adopted. Great efforts were made, also, to discourage the natural American tendency to employ the telephone for all purposes of quick communication, not only for the sake of wonting officers to the use of other means, but to obviate the danger that the enemy would tap a line and listen. Increasing dependence was placed on relays of runners, and bicycle or motor-cycle couriers, for the quick conveyance of messages; frequent use was made also of the T.P.S. (earth telegraphy) apparatus, for brief communications up to about one thousand yards.

As to whether there were disloyal civilians in the sector, some doubt remains. But strange things did happen. It is certain that, more than once, lights which flashed a dot-dash signal toward the enemy were detected; and other efforts to send information to the Germans by one or another of the wretched civilians, who were allowed by the French to drag out a dreadful existence in such villages as Ansauville, Mandres, or Raulecourt, were suspected. The disappearance of several of these into permanent French custody apparently confirmed the suspicions concerning them. In any case it is doubtless the fact that there was a certain leakage. The German lines and the German frontier were both very near; the German intelligence service was well manned; and the local commanders made use of their information to excellent advantage. It is probably true, also, that the loose-tongued babble prevalent at many American centers, as far back as the base ports, defying censorship and heedless of orders, facilitated the enemy's desire for knowledge respecting American identities and plans, not only at this time, but later.

But only a few days after the Twenty-Sixth arrived in the La Reine (Boucq) Sector, the enemy attempted one of the accepted and often most satisfactory means both of discovering the newcomers' names, and of testing their quality as fighting men.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIGHTS AT BOIS BRULÉ AND SEICHEPREY

IT will be remembered that the left of the La Reine (Boucq) Sector, as the Division took it over, was located in the vicinity of the village and important highway junction of Apremont. Directly to the north and west of the tiny town rose abruptly the wooded scarp of the Heights of the Meuse, the tableland between the Woevre plain and the Meuse valley; and here, in a stretch of shattered forest, called Bois Brulé (Burned Wood), were the trench lines held by the western Massachusetts troops (104th Infantry). Linked to the Americans on the left were units of a French Colonial division — the Tenth — commanded by General Marchand of Fashoda fame, whom the Twenty-Sixth was to have again for neighbors in the bitter fighting before Verdun, some seven months later.

The position was difficult to organize and defend. The forward lines were composed of short sections of trench organized as resistance centers by small groups with the support of automatics or machine guns — outposts, so to call them. Their mission was to delay any attack by resistance to the last. They were to expect no reinforcements from the principal line of resistance; and their task was rendered more difficult by the fact that the regiment's sub-sector formed a narrow salient, very open to attack; the outpost positions were confused with a tangle of abandoned trenches, saps, and *boyaux*, some of which led in the direction of the enemy; the whole imperfectly wired. The dangers of this little salient were pointed out to General Edwards by the Corps Commander, immediately upon the arrival of the Division in the sector. The French Division Commander had said it was a place where the Germans could come and take prisoners almost at will — an enterprise he had carried out on several occasions. Plans were immediately made, therefore, to change the disposition of the outposts and to construct improved defensive lines; but hardly had this work been commenced, before the Germans undertook to repeat on the Americans the treatment which had proved so profitable when applied to the French.

Command of the sector passed, as has been seen, on April 3. From April 5 to 8 a heavy artillery fire was directed on the junction of the French and American lines in Bois Brulé. Early in the morning of the 10th this fire increased in intensity, taking on the character of a regular "preparation," as the formidable *minenwerfer* commenced hurling their huge projectiles into our forward trenches; and presently, in the gray of the dawn, the German infantry appeared on the front of the left battalion (III) of the 104th Infantry, which was posted on a hill crest, on the left side of the local salient, at the same time attacking the adjoining sub-sector held by the French. But the waves of assault were checked almost at once. At the first hint that the enemy infantry were coming over — a hint given by the changed character of the supporting artillery fire, our own guns,[1] without waiting for the infantry's signal, dropped a barrage across the threatened front, which broke up effectually the leading lines of the German assailants. But their supports were close behind, nor did they lack determination. In little groups, widely spaced, they pushed forward their advance across the narrow waste of No Man's Land, and not till the Americans had laid down a heavy protective fire from hand grenades did the enemy falter and fall back through the curtain of shells our artillery placed behind them. Instead of making prisoners the Germans left some of their own men in our hands, wounded, and collected by our stretcher-bearers as the fight dwindled and died down. And very useful some of these fellows were to prove, for not only did they reveal what enemy troops were opposite the American lines,[1] but also they told that a renewal of the attack was intended for the following day.

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[1] II/101st F.A.; "F" Battery, 103d F.A.

As it happened, however, there was given the Americans an opportunity to catch their breath and to effect some reorganization. On the 11th there occurred no activity on the enemy's part, save a very heavy and sustained artillery bombardment, over the same Bois Brulé area. Severe though it was, this fire was not sufficient to interfere with the relief, that same night, of the battalion which had fought on the 10th, by another battalion of the same regiment (II/104th Infantry), the remaining battalion retaining its position on the right of the regimental subsector. Damage was done to the wire communications by the enemy bombardment, but no more than could be repaired by the indefatigable signalmen, whose work at this time, as always under fire, was very admirable.

Not till the next day was the attack resumed. But this time it quickly became apparent that the affair was to be far more serious than the raid of the 10th. At daybreak the enemy attacked, behind a dense barrage, at two places simultaneously. One party drove at the right of the 104th's line; the other was directed, as before, against the hillside where our line joined up with that of the French. In squad columns and small combat groups, little deterred by the heavy fire which was rained on them, the gray infantry came on with the utmost steadiness. There was weight behind the attack; the gaps in the lines were quickly filled; and, under cover of a splendid artillery support, it was not long before a few groups had effected a lodgment in portions of our advanced trenches, while the main force of the attack swung against the French.

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[1] Detachments of the 25th, 36th, and 65th Regiments, brought into the sector for the express purpose of this attack.

Over on the right the fight became a series of encounters between isolated groups and even individuals. It was only on the left that, early in the action, the situation gave any cause for concern. For a brief space the French gave way. Finding their advanced posts untenable under the intense *minenwerfer* fire, and hard-pressed by the German infantry, they withdrew from certain forward positions of doubtful value, which the enemy promptly occupied. Our left flank became exposed; a counter-attack was called for, and the response by the 104th was immediate. With the bayonet our men advanced steadily, though suffering considerably by the exceedingly well-placed enemy artillery fire, and pushed their attack home. Stubbornly the Germans resisted; but, after a period of bitter, hand-to-hand fighting, they presently were driven out with heavy loss, and the situation on the French front quite restored.

In two other places, shortly after noon, the enemy pushed into our forward positions. So numerous were the forces engaged and so sustained his attack that it was thought he might be intending a break through our lines, to the commanding heights in the rear. But, more probably, they were correct in their estimation who saw in the Bois Brulé affair merely a strong demonstration, the intention of which might have been to assist in pinning the local forces to their present ground and to prevent the dispatch of further forces from the Lorraine front to Flanders — where, in the second phase of the mighty German offensive, Ludendorff's forces under Von Quast and Sixt Von Arnim were sending the British reeling back from Messines, Estaires, and Neuve-Chapelle. It was on April 11, be it remembered, that Sir Douglas Haig's order of the day contained the solemn warning, "With backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end. The safety of our homes, and the freedom of mankind, depend alike upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment." With success almost within his grasp, the German Commander-in-Chief must prevent at all hazards the arrival of any reinforcements for his hard-pressed British adversary. It is probable that this local Bois Brulé attack had little other purpose. But it gives a certain relief to even the comparatively unimportant fight in the woods above Apremont, when one considers it not as an isolated raid, but as intimately linked, even across leagues of distance, with the struggle of giants on the Flanders plains and marshes.

And the fight was of real importance to the Twenty-Sixth, for considerable forces were engaged; incidents occurred which took the stoutest sort of fighting to turn to advantage, along with good leadership and quick thinking; and it sealed our alliance with the French forever.

On the afternoon of April 12 reinforcements were sent in to assist the 2d Battalion and the Machine-Gun Company, 104th Infantry, which had borne the weight of the fighting all day. These included 3d Battalion, 103d Infantry, and Company "C," 103d Machine-Gun Battalion; nor was it any time at all before they were also engaged, and hotly. All through the afternoon and evening of the 12th the struggle continued — the Germans holding stubbornly to the sections of trench they had entered, only to be fiercely assailed by the Americans, who, in turn, would be checked by well-placed hostile artillery fire. It was a fight of sections and platoons, in a tangle of broken trenches, twisted wire, and thick underbrush, where organized control was difficult and unified direction impossible, where individual grit and fighting ability counted for everything. And in this rough-and-tumble work the Germans were outclassed from the start by the hard-bitten, tough young giants from the West, who fought as joyously with their fists as with grenade or bayonet. The sole prisoner to be taken by the Germans was a corporal, who, covering the withdrawal of his squad from a section of trench in accordance with orders, was cut off by staying too long in the face of the advancing enemy, fighting single-handed. By these methods was the situation restored. The enemy was pushed out of the first-line positions he had entered, less by the sweep of a counter-attack organized in accordance with the manuals than by fierce, impetuous hammer-blows delivered by little groups of fighting men, led by subalterns and sergeants, all eager to come to grips with their foe. On the night of the 12th a renewed attempt to enter the lines of these Massachusetts troops was made; but this, less resolutely pushed than its predecessors, was promptly smothered, while a final local counter-attack, by Company "G," 104th Infantry, early the following morning, drove out any small remnants which had clung to their places through the night hours.

The fighting spirit was there! That was what the Apremont–Bois Brulé affair proved anew, with respect to the Twenty-Sixth Division. For the single prisoner lost the battalions engaged took more than forty. The Germans who broke their way into our advanced positions were met, not as enemies whose reputation and strength were redoubtable, indeed, but as so much vermin to be exterminated. It was the Yankee, not the German, who showed the true fighting edge throughout those long three days of ding-dong wrestling. The enemy attack was accepted, not as a menace, but as a challenge; and the result was what could have been expected.

The satisfaction of the French was quickly manifested. Hardly had the guns cooled before the Corps Commander commended the American troops in general orders.[1] A

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[1] No. 1870-3 } *VIII Army, 32d Army Corps Staff*
General Orders } *III Bureau, Headquarters*
No. 124 } *April* 14, 1918

On April 12, just past, the enemy, supported by powerful artillery, made an attack in force on the lines held by the left of the Twenty-Sixth American Division and the right of the Tenth Colonial Division.

The struggle continued throughout the day and night of April 12 and 13.

In the course of the engagement, thanks to the vigorous and repeated counter-fortnight later, when the 104th Infantry had gone into reserve positions, it was to receive an even higher honor. Assembled near Boucq, on Sunday, April 28, the regiment was thrilled to the heart with honest pride when General Passaga affixed the Croix de Guerre to the regimental colors, with the words, "I am proud to decorate the flag of a regiment which has shown such fortitude and courage; I am proud to decorate the flag of a nation which has come to our aid in the fight for liberty."

Thus it was the colors of a unit of the Twenty-Sixth Division which was the first, in all the history of the American Army, to receive a foreign decoration.[1]

To the regimental commander and 116 other officers and men were also awarded, on the same occasion, the coveted bronze cross with its red and green ribbon. And conspicuous, indeed, were the acts of gallantry which earned that honor, in a fight where gallantry and pluck were everywhere.[2]

Scarcely a week was to elapse before the enemy again tested the mettle of the new troops opposed to him. That he was planning an attack somewhere in the vicinity was fairly evident. On April 17 the French on the right brushed

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attacks of the Americans and of our Colonials, the enemy, in spite of his superiority in numbers, was thrown back from several trench positions where he had gained a foothold, and left in our hands more than forty prisoners and a large number of dead.

During this fight, carried on under a severe bombardment, the American troops gave proof not only of their splendid courage, which we know, but also of a brotherhood in arms which was absolute and ever present.

With such men as these, the cause of liberty is sure to triumph.

Headquarters, April 14, 1918 PASSAGA

[1] The citation reads: "For greatest fighting spirit and self-sacrifice during action of April 10, 12, and 13, 1918. Suffering from very heavy bombardments, and attacked by very strong German forces, the [regiment] succeeded in preventing their dangerous advance, and with greatest energy reconquered, at the point of the bayonet, the few ruined trenches which had to be abandoned at the first onset, at the same time making prisoners."

[2] Troops principally engaged at Bois Brulé were: 2d Battalion, 3d Battalion, Machine-Gun Company, 104th Infantry; Company "C," 103d Machine-Gun Battalion; 3d Battalion, 103d Infantry; Batteries "D," "E," "F," 101st Field Artillery; Battery "F," 103d Field Artillery; 3 platoons 90-mm. guns of 101st Field Artillery; 101st Trench Mortar Battery.

back a raiding party. Reports of the watchers in the balloons, or in the observation posts hidden in the ruins of Beaumont or in the edge of Jury Wood, told of increased train movements along the Vigneulles line, of an apparent rehearsal of some attack formation by troops in the rear area, of artillery coming into the sector. A relief of the German division then in line was the opinion of many. A conviction that the enemy was going to show in this neighborhood a raiding activity similar to that which he had displayed elsewhere as preliminary to attacks in force, was implanted in the minds of other good authorities. The suspicion grew with still a third group that a grand attack was to be launched for the purpose of taking Verdun, or the right of the line, in reverse. The feeling that the Germans were too deeply committed in the prodigious enterprises against the British in Flanders and Picardy, to attempt anything at all in this part of the line, prevailed comfortably with not a few. A demonstration — yes, but nothing serious. But one feature of the enemy activity was very noticeable — his artillery was conducting an extensive registration fire. That meant that new batteries had come into the sector, and more than would be the case were it merely a question of relieving batteries already in position. Daily, at all hours, his guns would fire on communications, assembly places, observation points, cross-roads, battery positions, command posts. It was not the ordinary harassing fire. The troops had become accustomed to sudden bursts of shelling dropped with uncanny accuracy on this or that "sensitive point" within our lines — a fire as intense as it was brief, as irregular as it was disconcerting. But the fire which began on April 15 had a different quality. It was a shell here, another yonder, a pair of them "bracketing" a position, often overlooked by an aeroplane sailing high in the blue. And this, as the French said, "gave furiously to think."

From the observers came a bit of news one afternoon which spread quickly — news which a couple of prisoners picked up by the French confirmed. This was the passage through the village of Mont Sec, away in rear of the enemy lines, of a column of infantry strange to the sector, whose presence boded important events, since it comprised, so babbled the prisoners, one of the new *Sturmbataillone* of which the Western Front was beginning to hear.[1] That it was deemed necessary to pick and train especially qualified assault troops, for any unusual operation, revealed a certain weakness in the internal German organization and morale. True, the German tendency always had been to create *corps d'élite*, but it was nevertheless significant that the High Command felt that, for special strains, it could not wholly rely on the ordinary infantry. And that the cream of many battalions had been skimmed to provide these hardy, capable fellows meant that the average value of these units was lowered by just so much. However, the presence in the La Reine Sector of one of these chosen bodies could hardly mean other than that some project of importance was in the wind, taken in conjunction with the obvious increase in the enemy artillery of all calibers.

It appeared probable that the enemy attack, if delivered, would lie against the right of the Division. Here lay his best chance of success, whether for a raid, or for a break-through toward the Beaumont–Flirey ridge, the key of the position. For long, improved plans of defense for this part of the sector, partly based on the recommendation of the American commanders, had been under consideration by the Corps Staff. Provisional plans had already been put into effect. The commander of the Beaumont sub-sector had altered more than once the disposition of his infantry and machine guns, agreeably to the changing ideas of higher authority, in the resistance centers of Seicheprey and Remières Wood. For here the defense presented grave difficulties.

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[1] The typical *Sturmbataillon* of the period included the following elements:
4 assault companies (*Stosstruppen*, each 100 men).
6 machine guns.
1 company of bombers.
1 company of flame-throwers.
1 battery of accompanying field artillery.
Motor-cars were attached for quick transportation. The battalion commander usually had the rank of captain.

The Seicheprey–Remières Wood front had an extent, on the map, of something more than three thousand meters, which implies a distance of about two miles on the ground. It covered the crest and reverse slope of a low, east-west elevation, lying about fifteen hundred meters in advance of the zone of principal resistance on the ridge along the Metz–Saint-Dizier highway. A gradual slope on the north, or enemy side, extended down to the vale of the Rupt de Mad, while on either flank wide, shallow ravines, or "draws," extended in from the enemy's lines. Formerly there had existed a fairly complete system of fire and support trenches in advance of the village and the wood; but upon the adoption of the principles of organization for defense in depth, these forward lines, once held by a considerable garrison, were abandoned, both infantry and machine guns being disposed in deeper echelons. On the Seicheprey front, drawn back from the original front line into two points of resistance, considerably separated, there were retained but two companies — one in and about the village, the other in the woods, both backed by machine-gun detachments. Their mission was one of surveillance, coupled with such resistance as would delay, if it did not break up, a hostile attack. Troops on this line could expect no reinforcements. Their duty was to hold to the last; to dislodge temporarily successful enemy assailants by local counter-attacks. The two other companies of the battalion in this sub-sector were echeloned one thousand yards in rear, in the forward trenches of the main position in front of Beaumont village. Another battalion was similarly disposed on the left, its zone being bounded by the line Xivray–Rambucourt. The remaining battalion was in reserve, in the villages of Mandres and Ansauville; Regimental Headquarters were in Beaumont.

Communications were inadequate. Between the main position and the outpost line there extended a single country road, bordered by a single *boyau* for circulation in both directions. Another trench led back from Remières Wood; crossed the draw on the right flank; and connected with the left of the French sector, in Jury Woods. But as this was organized as a fire trench, its use for communications was badly hampered, and its rear terminus lay outside the divisional sector. Between Seicheprey and Remières Wood ran a single trench, very lightly held, in part only a corridor between walls of sandbags and gabions. Shell-proof shelters, when the Division took over the sector, may be said not to have existed. In Beaumont and Seicheprey a few fairly secure shelters had been constructed in the cellars of the houses; but these sufficed for only a small proportion of the garrisons; and in the trenches proper the shelters were of the most illusory description. The wire entanglements were in good condition; and something had been done to strengthen the combat positions and the flanks, a progressive plan of works having been inaugurated for the sector by the engineers, soon after arrival, which was being developed nightly by large details from the infantry. The ground lay open — bare fields of coarse, long grass, with marshy spots in all the hollows, with scarcely a tree save the characteristic poplars along the Metz highroad and the rough thickets of Remières Wood. And every foot of it, as has been already noted, was under direct and easy observation by the enemy watchers on Mont Sec.

The Connecticut regiment of infantry (102d), together with two companies of machine-gunners, was assigned to the Seicheprey–Remières lines, when the Division took over the sector. Since March 31 it had floundered about in the sticky mud of the Seicheprey trenches; there had been much harassing fire, especially gas, on the forward elements, as also on Headquarters. An episode occurred which angered the regiment (and higher authorities, too, God wot!), as showing how simple it was for energetic enemy patrols to penetrate well within our thinly held and long-extended outpost line.[1] It happened, on a night just after the fight in Bois Brulé, that a ration wagon was proceeding out past Xivray, toward the tiny hamlet of Marvoisin, where the 102d Infantry maintained a platoon in night combat position. Two men were in charge of the wagon; and among their supplies they carried a sack of company mail. All was going quietly, when suddenly, only a hundred yards or so from the detail's destination, the wagon was halted by an enemy ambush, the mules promptly pistoled, and one man spirited away, along with the invaluable mail, in less time than it takes to write about it. As silently as they had come did the Germans get away, eluding the pursuit which was immediately sent after them. Not a soul saw them, though they had laid their ambush nearly a half-mile inside our outpost line. The episode had value as an illustration of how easily the Division's front could be entered if conditions of weather were right; it had the effect of redoubling all precautions. Nor did the following days lack for additional rumors of impending trouble; and the night of April 19, when a relief was on, the anxiety was intense, indeed.

That night the 3d Battalion, 102d Infantry, was relieved in front and support trenches of the Beaumont subsector, by the 1st Battalion, 102d Infantry, under Major G. J. Rau. The latter troops came into the area for the first time — which takes on significance in view of what happened later — though they had already garrisoned the left of the regimental sector. The 2d Battalion was on the left at this time, with Companies "G" and "E" in line, "F" and "H" in support. When the relief was completed the incoming battalion found itself with "C" Company in Remières Wood, "D" Company in and about Seicheprey (where also the Battalion Headquarters was located), while "A" and "B" Companies occupied the support trenches in front of the "One-Bis position," as the main line of resistance was called, where their right (Company "A") connected with the French left in Jury Wood. The outgoing battalion commander, Captain C. M. Thompson, and the company officers remained in position, in accordance with the usual custom, to acquaint their successors with the terrain when daylight should come, and to turn over the permanent trench stores; but the command passed as soon as the relief was completed. The night was very still. No patrols or working parties were out because of the relief; but a singular quiet had settled over the hostile lines, in marked contrast with the aggressive activity of the days just previous. There was little rest, however, at Regimental Headquarters. Again and again were all lines of communication tested, all plans reviewed for the employment of the machine guns and infantry utilities; close touch was established with the engineers posted in Beaumont,[1] and with the regiments to right and left. Not, indeed, till word came in, about one o'clock in the morning of April 20, that the relief was completed, was there any slackening of the tension.

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[1] As a means of preventing the capture of either isolated sentinels or large outposts, Corps Headquarters had prescribed that outpost groups should never exceed twenty-five men, and that sentries should not be posted more than fifty feet away from the group. The result was that, inevitably, long distances separated these little combat groups, and the intervals were difficult to watch after dark.

But the relaxation was brief enough. At 3.05 o'clock in the morning of April 20 there was laid on every part of the forward zone, and on the artillery positions, such a bombardment as the Division had not yet even dreamed of. On the Seicheprey–Remières trenches, the support positions, and on Beaumont village, there crashed down a concentration from guns of all calibers up to 210 millimeters, which recalled to the French officers with the 102d Infantry those fearsome days of Verdun in 1916. Implacably, with deadly accuracy and great intensity, the fire of destruction continued. Eight minutes after it commenced all wire communications out of Beaumont were cut, save a single thread to the artillery; runners became casualties almost as soon as they started with their messages. In the forward trenches the meager shelters were caved in or blown apart, in many cases burying their occupants; the volumes of gas which were released along with the high-explosive shells were severe on the laboring artillerymen, who sent over their normal protective barrages and counter-battery fires, in prompt response to the rocket signals from the front-line infantry. For two hours the bombardment continued with scarcely a lull in its savage intensity, with the result that the Remières–Seicheprey outpost garrisons were not only much reduced by casualties, but also broken up into isolated groups with only a slender communication, when any existed at all. Platoon commanders who, at the first alarm, brought their men together in the prescribed, but as yet unfamiliar, combat positions, saw them killed or wounded in groups; others who disposed their little forces in the slight shelter of shell holes ran the danger of losing control; direct hits played havoc with both machine guns and field pieces; the Regimental Headquarters, smothered in fire, was for the moment put completely out of action.

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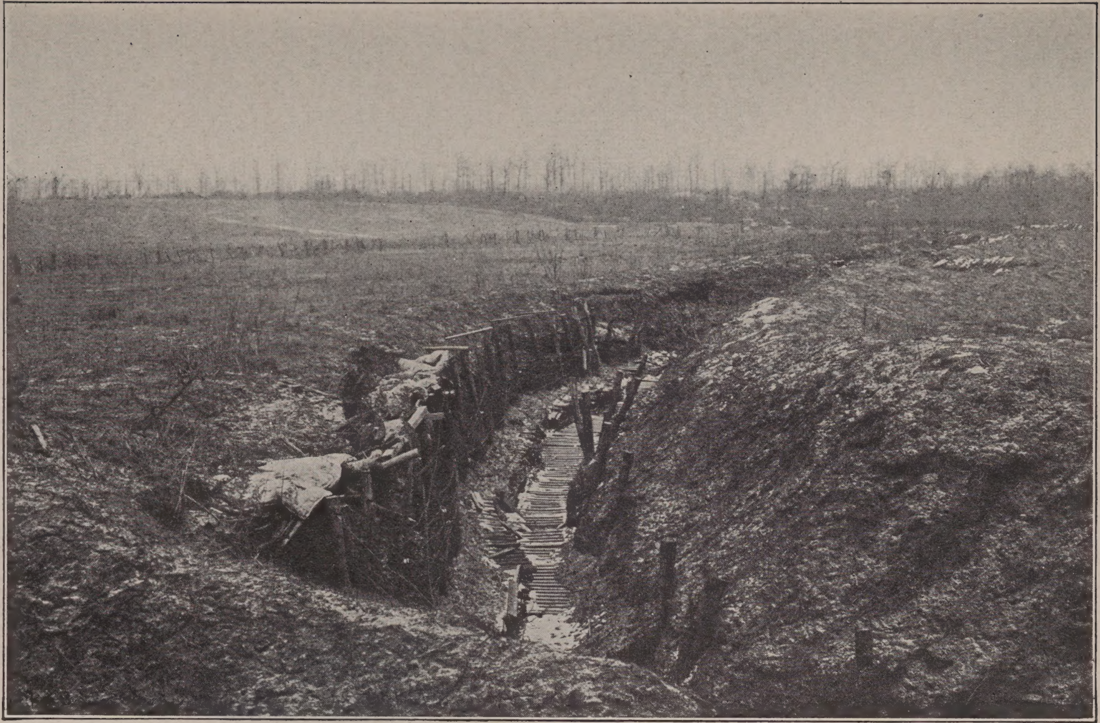
[1] Company "A," 101st Engineers.

To add to the confusion caused by the bombardment a heavy daybreak fog lay thickly in every hollow, mingling with the smoke of the bursting shells and the dust, to screen the enemy's movements, and to obscure all rocket signals. Vainly the outposts peered toward the German lines; not a hint of the enemy's intended action was received until, about five o'clock, the forms of his infantry were seen plunging out of the mist and the battle haze, right in the wake of his devastating barrage. A torrent of fire was rolled over Seicheprey and Remières Wood, settling like a wall, enclosing them. And then, so close that they suffered from their own shelling, before the stunned defenders in Seicheprey could wholly rally, the gray-clad raiders descended.

They came on in three columns. Up the wide draw to the west and south of the village came one party; another flanked Remières Wood from the east; a third drove straight against our thin-held front. And resolute troops they were. The *Sturmbataillon* led the attack, supported on its flanks by two battalions of infantry already in the sector, accompanied by detachments of signalmen and pioneers. By the Germans' own statements not less than three thousand men participated in the attack, the onrush of whom was sustained by two American companies — less than four hundred rifles. Methodically and rapidly the enemy raiders worked. In a moment they had entered Seicheprey from flank and rear, where they picked up the medical officer and entire personnel of the battalion aid-station with other prisoners; all along the line they picked up many individuals, survivors of luckless outpost groups. Immediately on gaining that section of the outpost trenches called Sibille Trench, west and north of the village, they set about organizing it for defense against counter-attack; in Seicheprey they set contact mines; their signalmen laid their telephone wires almost before the infantry was ready for them.

But not for long was the enemy allowed to stay. His intention was, undoubtedly, to effect a permanent lodgment. A captured officer stated before he died that the German plan contemplated holding the captured trenches against an expected American counter-attack, then to renew their advance, and gain possession of the Beaumont–Flirey ridge. Other versions indicated that at least the line of the Sibille Trench was to be held; and the very



REMIÈRES TRENCH AND REMIÈRES WOOD

complete preparation for its organization bore out this assertion. An operation more extensive than a mere raid to make prisoners was in order, at all events; but, thanks to the grit and fighting ability of Connecticut militia troops, the plan was brought to naught.

A defensive force of a sort was quickly got together by Major Rau at the first alarm. With the orderlies, clerks, and runners at Battalion Headquarters, from the company kitchens, from the twenty prisoners inherited from the First Division, a resolute counter-attack was delivered, which, continuing through the streets of the village, drove out the enemy before he could realize on his initial gains. The fiercest hand-to-hand fighting occurred. It was with his cleaver that one cook accounted for his adversary; it was with the bayonet and the pistol that the Germans were driven back to the shelter of the cemetery and of Sibille Trench north of the town. Combat patrols to the flanks kept close touch with the retiring foe. By 6 o'clock the village proper was cleared.

Meanwhile, in the tangles of Remières Wood the raiders had achieved a similar first success. Smothered by the artillery fire, the defenders were thrown into a momentary confusion of which the enemy took advantage. But here, too, as soon as a semblance of organized resistance could be set up, the enemy was checked and later driven out. But not for long after he had relaxed his hold on Seicheprey did he fall back from the other important pivot of the forward position.

Everywhere the struggle became a soldier's battle, where the fighting power of the individual counted for everything. And how well our men fought the Germans themselves have testified. In Remières Wood, for instance, were found two men of a machine-gun crew, killed — one with his finger on the trigger, the other with a feed strip in his hand, all ammunition exhausted, but with a heap of dead Germans in front of them, stopped by the two in their attempt to rush the gun. On the left eight sole survivors of a platoon of "E" Company, which became involved, themselves wounded or having been once buried in a smashed dugout, fought cheerfully throughout the day. In other centers combat groups were killed, fighting to the last man, at their posts. Surrounded, there was many a lad who, summoned to surrender, fought with clubbed and broken rifle, and when overpowered, still struggled with his captors — as was told by the Germans themselves months later. For every prisoner taken, the enemy paid in good measure.

Of all this desperate work on the front not a word could be got back to Regimental Headquarters for some time. Not till 6.30 o'clock did the Commander get definite word that Seicheprey was attacked; and one can fancy the electrical effect of this first message, when the runner, wounded and spent, stumbled in with word that the enemy infantry was actually in the village. Officers and scouts sent forward from Beaumont could learn nothing owing to the intensity of the fire, while the dust and mist closed the eyes of the observers. What reports came in through the morning were all of dark import, indeed. Remières Wood was lost; Rau, in Seicheprey, was merely holding; the enemy had effected a lodgment between the two front-line battalions; the French had been attacked in Jury Wood itself; casualties were heavy; officers had been killed or taken prisoner; the enemy was attacking in force; four of the machine guns had been lost by direct hits from shellfire. At one o'clock in the afternoon the situation looked dark enough. It appeared that the front line had crumbled away.

Actually, however, long before this time, the situation had begun to be righted. But of this little could be surmised. The difficulty of directing the fight can be imagined, with Beaumont practically isolated, communications cut, officers and runners able to get contact with the front only by taking advantage of momentary lulls in the continuous bombardment that plastered all the communicating trenches. Coördination of the infantry's signaled demands for artillery support and the gunners' response was for hours impossible, owing to delay in transmission from fog, smoke, and fire. Back at Brigade, Division, and Corps Headquarters, even greater uncertainty reigned. For, although information officers from all three Staffs and from the artillery were sent at once to Beaumont and to Seicheprey to obtain information, their efforts were for hours in vain, the fierce intensity of the enemy fire on all communications making traveling slow and difficult.

But though the situation, early in the afternoon, began to clear a little, it appeared grave enough. The enemy was still holding Sibille Trench and part of Remières Wood in force. He had moved up large numbers of troops close behind his own front. He began anew a fire for demolition — this time on the wire and other accessory defenses of the main resistance line, effecting serious breaches. And this looked as if he was going to press his attack. Preparations were at once made to meet it should it develop. The 3d Battalion, 102d Infantry, was brought forward again from its reserve billets to Beaumont, to man the "One-Bis" trenches; while two companies of the 101st Infantry came from Raulecourt as reinforcements of the same line, along with the engineer company already in Beaumont. From the Division reserve (104th Infantry) two battalions were put at the disposal of General Traub, and moved forward within easy reach. By nightfall these arrangements had been completed. The regimental commander of the 102d Infantry was able to supervise personally the disposition of the troops; and was cheered by a friendly call from the Division's old friend Colonel Bertrand, of the neighboring 162d (French), who cantered over with his adjutant to get in closer touch, through the eager shelling of enemy sniping batteries, as happy as a boy to be in action, though annoyed by his fine mount's being bothered by the gun-fire.

By evening, however, it appeared evident that a further German attack was stayed, at least for the moment. Our artillery had landed on his reserves massed in Saint-Baussant with deadly effect. His own continued its punishing fire, but with slackened intensity; his infantry was making no forward movement. Along the front there was much sniping activity, but nothing else.

With that negative information one was forced to be content, since no word had come back to Headquarters from the three sets of combat patrols which had been sent forward to gain contact and bring back information. The Corps had planned a counter-attack in some force should the enemy still be within our outpost line on the morning of the 21st, to check, before it started, any effort on his part to gain a further advantage. Late in the afternoon of the 20th the memorandum containing the outline of this project had come down to the 102d Infantry, four companies of which regiment were to make the attack in conjunction with two French companies on the right. The objectives were to be Sibille Trench and Remières Wood, if reports of patrols should show that any portion of our line was still in enemy hands.

General Traub (commanding the 51st Infantry Brigade) was charged with the detailed preparation of the plan; but, actually, since the Corps Commander in person and his staff were in and out of Brigade Headquarters all day with volleys of orders, advice, recommendations, and instructions, a large part of the study of the situation and the framing of the proper orders was taken out of General Traub's hands by higher authority. Division Headquarters had little to do in the Seicheprey fight from beginning to end, so localized was it. Calls for extra ammunition, for new Chauchat automatics, and for rations, however, were promptly met as fast as they were received from the 102d

Infantry; and several times the supply trucks or side cars ran the gantlet of the enemy bombardment to fetch forward the necessary supplies. The Division Commander was in close personal touch, however; and the Chief of Staff, just assigned, was forward in Beaumont during a good part of the critical day, for observation of the situation.

All through the evening plans for the counter-attack were made, changed, amended. A battalion commander from the 102d Infantry was selected by General Traub on his own responsibility as most suitable to lead the attack. Toward 11.30 o'clock in the evening the brigade attack order was given him, with final instructions. Briefly, the order contemplated an artillery preparation of half an hour, to be followed by the advance of the four companies, with the French on the right, at 4.30 o'clock. The parallel of departure was fixed in the vicinity of the crossing of the Seicheprey–Beaumont road and the "One-Bis" trench lines, approximately; details of the attack were to be arranged by the commander of the party; and these he completed after conference with the commander of the 102d Infantry in Beaumont soon after midnight. The company commanders were notified of the project, and given directions for the assembly. All appeared to be well in preparation, with one important exception. The Corps had expressly prescribed that the attack should be dependent on the reports of patrols as to whether elements of our front line were still occupied by the enemy; and all night long no reports came in. Three sets of patrols had gone out, earlier in the day, from Battalion and Regimental Headquarters; but such were the difficulties of getting about their reports were incredibly slow in getting back. A final patrol, divided into two parties, was ordered forward by General Traub, at 2 o'clock, with the idea that their work could be done and their reports returned in time to furnish a basis for the scheduled attack at 4.30 — an absolute impossibility.

By this silence of the scouts the attack commander allowed himself to be unduly influenced. Displaying commendable energy at first, he presently, attaching too much importance to a delay in the arrival of his companies at the starting-place, and the absence of authentic news from the front, as well as by what he considered an incomplete equipment for his troops, sent back word to Regimental Headquarters expressing a doubt that he could make the attack at all. And finally, a short half-hour before his attack was scheduled to start, he took the extreme responsibility of disobeying explicit orders, and called the operation off. In point of fact, the last groups of enemy raiders, exhausted and spent, had crept back to their own lines with the fall of darkness; but this was not known positively. Promptly on the appointed minute the French companies moved out from Jury Wood, covered by a patrol which the Seicheprey battalion sent to protect their left flank. Promptly the artillery dropped the prescribed barrier fire across the area it was expected our infantry would traverse in its advance. But all to no purpose. As soon as they saw that our troops had not started, the French halted. The whole operation, planned with such solicitude by all concerned, ended in a complete breakdown. The leader's excuse was that he believed General Traub would have changed his orders had he (the General) been cognizant of the changed conditions. Promptly court-martialed, however, for disobedience of orders, and convicted, the officer (who had long been suspected by his intimates of not being quite sound mentally), ended a creditable army career in obscurity, carrying the burden of blame for a fiasco, which a better intelligence service, or a better estimate of the situation by highest authority, perhaps might have averted.

Any review of the fight at Seicheprey is like to reach only one general conclusion. The balance of profit lay with the American troops. The moral advantage remained with the Division. Unquestionably, the Germans won material successes. They took about 130 prisoners, including several officers; two infantry companies and a machine-gun company were reduced by more than fifty per cent in strength. Certain sections of our advanced line were penetrated, after a devastating bombardment; the organized defense of the sector was thrown temporarily into confusion; the German planes were masters of the air, whether for directing artillery fire or for employing machine-gun fire themselves. As a raid, the operation succeeded handsomely.

Certain points of weakness developed also in the American organization. For instance, a shortage of ammunition for certain batteries occurred rather early in the action — not so serious, however, that the volume of fire was appreciably affected.[1] Patrolling to the front did not bring back promptly information which could immediately be made use of to advantage. Communication between infantry and artillery was uncertain and slow; the air service was of little use; other means of information were insufficient to meet the emergency.

But the moral advantage — which, in war, is the finally determining element — rested with the Americans. They suffered; they lost prisoners; but the losses they inflicted on the enemy were exceedingly heavy. Upwards of 150 dead were left for our troops to bury; the German official report admitted upwards of 600 casualties; the enemy abandoned a large amount of valuable material on the field. The mission of the American troops — to fight to the death in place without reinforcement — was performed; the enemy was driven out of Seicheprey and Remières Wood by bloody, hand-to-hand fighting. A *Sturmbataillon*, backed by other troops of long experience, yielded before the courage, tenacity, and fighting spirit of some despised

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[1] The 51st Artillery Brigade fired approximately 25,000 rounds on the day of April 20–21, far in excess of its normal allowance.

New England militia. Stunned by a bombardment of terrific intensity, their defenses in ruins, with no hope of reinforcement, with only an uncertain connection with their artillery, the Yankee infantry recovered its organization and fought successfully to a stand-up finish. Its fighting edge was merely tempered by the fire; the blows it dealt the enemy were the stronger, as they felt the enemy's strength the greater. Choked by gas, blinded by fog and smoke, the gunners, ambulance-drivers, runners, signalmen, and caisson-drivers went about their tasks with perfect coolness and courage, under the heaviest bombardments, as only men can work to whom duty and pride are the sole considerations. The troops came out of Seicheprey bruised and bleeding; but their heads were held high.

Interesting sidelights on the Seicheprey fight developed later. The first considerable engagement fought alone by American troops in France, the contest took on an unexpected value in stimulating interest in America over subscriptions to the third popular loan for the expenses of the war, full accounts of the valor of the New England troops being sent home at once, through official channels.

Another sidelight was that cast by the captors of some of the officers of the 102d Infantry, in conversation with our men. To them the Germans revealed complacently the efficiency of their intelligence service in the La Reine Sector — telling how their men, fluent in English and wearing American uniforms, had made their way into our lines for brief stays, mingled with our units, by asserting that they belonged to a neighboring regiment, and proved this by relating to our captured officers many anecdotes of the American company kitchens and mess-line gossip, asking for this or that sergeant or cook by their nicknames, and so on. Incidents such as General Traub's having been shelled out of his Headquarters in Ansauville were common talk; information regarding the American organization was complete and carefully charted, the only error being in the number of automatic rifles allowed to an infantry company. It was as disconcerting as it was amazing. Wrong, however, was the German estimate of the number of American troops in France — they appeared to have no idea of what actually was being accomplished in the matter of building and transporting an army. Sincere apparently was their respect for the prowess of the American fighting man; respectful indeed were their remarks concerning the power and accuracy of the American artillery. The German press might sneer as it would about the effort of the United States to assist her Allies; the men "up front" knew that their new adversaries, as tried out in Bois Brulé and Seicheprey, while not yet expert soldiers, were dangerous in a stand-up fight.

CHAPTER IX

DAY BY DAY IN THE LA REINE SECTOR

WHAT influences, other than fighting, were at work at this time, to shape the Division's character, and to spread its reputation? Like any other living thing with a soul and a spirit, a combat unit, such as the Twenty-Sixth, is always taking color from its surroundings; upon its inherited traits are grafted constantly the growths sprung from environment and circumstance. One thinks of a Division, not as a community, but as an individual.

Perhaps we should consider in this connection how the system of promotions and replacements, put into operation late in the winter, came to affect this unit of the Expeditionary Force.

As originally published, orders with respect to filling vacancies prescribed that (*a*) those vacancies caused by casualties in combat should be filled one third by promotion, and two thirds by replacements, and (*b*) all other vacancies should be filled by replacements. The result was to block the promotion of any captain of a combat regiment unless all the majors were killed or wounded; until three of the lieutenant-colonels of infantry of a Division were battle casualties, no major could be moved up; in the non-commissioned grades a similar difficulty stood in the way of promoting a likely corporal. Naturally, vacancies caused by death or wounds were fewer than those caused by other reasons; but to positions made vacant by the dispatch of officers and non-commissioned officers to the United States, to schools, to hospital for sickness or injury, or by transfer, no candidate from a lower grade could be promoted in any event.

Thus a traditional and satisfactory reward for good conduct was practically inhibited; an effective stimulus to exceptional effort was taken away; ambition was deadened. Illustrative were the cases of two infantry captains in one regiment in the Division. Their respective battalion commanders having been transferred in November, 1917, a few weeks after arrival in France, one to staff duty, another to the Provost Marshal's department, the two captains were each given charge of a battalion, and led their units with enthusiasm, competency, and devotion through the training period, the Chemin des Dames experience, the front-line work of the La Reine Sector, and the Aisne–Marne offensive of July, without promotion, although repeatedly recommended for advancement on the basis of meritorious conduct in the field. More than that, to one of these battalions were sent from the replacement depots no fewer than three majors, one after the other, whose complete inexperience in the field and utter incompetence required their relief after the briefest period possible. Of other replacement officers assigned to the Division under the operation of the system — to mention only those of high rank — one was relieved as the result of the findings of a board of inquiry; another was relieved because his sanity was in question; a third was transferred to duty with a chain of army laundries; a fourth was so incompetent that only the loyalty of his adjutant and operations officer carried him through at all. And these were all officers of the Regular establishment, whose assignment to the command of regiments blocked absolutely the promotion of field officers who had carried the battalions through months of front-line fighting and a half-dozen movements by rail or road. It speaks highly, indeed, for the soldierly qualities of the officers thus passed over that in not a single case did they waver from their steady work for the common cause and for the reputation of their units.

This feature of the replacement system was less objectionable, however, than the fact that an adequate number of substitutes was not furnished for the officers and noncommissioned officers who left the Division for other duty or as hospital cases. These men were lost to the Twenty-Sixth for good. Once a wounded man got back into the base hospitals, he never came back to his old command, save in rare instances. Attached, upon recovery, to a replacement battalion, he was transferred far and near. Causing great disappointment to the individual, the rule worked badly also in that the morale of the whole Division was affected by the knowledge that it could not get its own old men back. It is difficult to understand, even at this distance, the advantages of a system which denied the natural desire to be, in the case of any individual, closely and continually identified with his own company, regiment, or division. Combat regulations emphasized the necessity of maintaining the identity of all units, from the squad upwards, recognizing the immense value to discipline and fighting spirit that results from companionship and intimacy. But the replacement orders effected a complete reversal of this principle. It was hard to get the point of view of those who had the problem of providing replacements, not only for a single division, but for an enormous and most complex force. It was unfortunately easy to raise the cry that, here again, was being manifested a desire on the part of General Headquarters to break down the identity of a National Guard Division. The rumor received, indeed, wide currency among the French, even at this early date, that the Twenty-Sixth was being badly treated in this matter of replacements and promotions for the further reason that the Division Commander was not *au mieux* at General Headquarters — so swift is gossip, even among troops in the field.

One would wish to dismiss summarily the rumor of a certain animus against the Division at General Headquarters. It is deeply to be regretted that such gossip ever gained credence, for its effect on all concerned was not good. There should be no room for exploiting personal grievances, or personal grudges, within sound of the guns. Not that it is difficult to understand the attitude of either the Division or of General Headquarters — the one very jealous of its identity, very loyal to its Commander, feeling itself a little distinct from other less experienced divisions, especially beloved by the French; the other unwilling to show favors, and hence perhaps inclined to enforce its orders with special stress on any Division which thought well of itself. It is possible, should personal differences have existed between the Division Commander and high ranking officers at General Headquarters, that these should have been reflected in the mutual attitude of the Division and the Headquarters Staffs. From whatever source it sprang, however, notwithstanding the inherent unlikelihood of any rancor existing between a combat unit of good reputation and its exceedingly capable governing authorities, such a feeling appears to have existed, though quite without definition, during a considerable period of the Division's service.

The latter weeks of April and most of the month of May passed without special incident. Twice the Division's sector limits were enlarged (May 23 and 27) toward the right (east) until its right boundary followed the Noviant–Limey road and the eastern edge of Voisogne Wood; while on the left its boundaries were restricted to the line Broussey–Vargevaux Pond, both exclusive. The change was part of the general plan for the improvement of the sector's defense, which had been under contemplation ever since it had been shown that the plans existing when the Twenty-Sixth took over the sector were insufficient to prevent enemy incursions. It was the Division's task, now, to enlarge the work commenced by its predecessors; and comprehensive schemes for new wiring, dugouts, new trench lines in rear (along the Ansauville–Bernecourt–

Raulecourt general line) were sited and begun, as well as cable trenches, and other elements of accessory defense. The "work maps" at Headquarters showed, as a result of the labors of the engineers and large infantry details, a daily extension of new construction.

Commanders of troops were invited to submit schemes looking to improved tactical dispositions. The situation was given most thorough study by both the Division and the Corps Staffs; and, as a consequence, there were certain changes made in the direction of echelonment in greater depth and to insure a more flexible defensive line. Reliefs of front-line battalions occurred every fifth day, the men going to rest billets where baths and the steam delousing machines were available. In many directions it was possible to set machinery in motion which made for the troops' increased efficiency and comfort. Sanitary inspectors, dietitians, and experts in such matters as record-keeping, paid visits to all units at the front and made helpful recommendations; the allowance of motor transport was enlarged, thus improving the service of distribution of rations, forage, and other supplies. In the General Staff sections at Division Headquarters there was developed a quickened energy and a smoother coördination of effort, which was reflected all through the organization. For this result it appears that much credit should go to Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) A. L. Pendleton, Jr., Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, whose influence had already been in evidence at more than one crisis in the Division's affairs. The entry on the scene of the new Chief of Staff was not without effect, also, and in more ways than one. Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Dowell, upon being attached to the 102d Infantry as second in command, was succeeded as Chief of Staff, on April 18, as has already been noted, by Lieutenant-Colonel (later Colonel) D. K. Major, Jr. An infantry officer of the Regular establishment, a graduate of the Leavenworth schools, the newcomer brought to his duties an extensive knowledge of the military art and of the theory of General Staff work, together with a tremendous capacity for driving toil. A most efficient executive, this officer often achieved results by methods somewhat at variance with the principles ordinarily accepted as regulating the daily relations between a Chief of Staff and those about him.

Since at this time the General Staff system received a remarkable accession of influence and authority in the Division's administration, and for the best, it may be not without value to review briefly, at this point of the narrative, some of the objects it was hoped to obtain by developing to the full the principles of General Staff duties laid down in the Field Service Regulations.

For one reason alone a General Staff for a field force was regarded as indispensable. Under the American system there had always existed a danger that our field forces might be encumbered by incompetent general officers. None too many of the titular brigade or division commanders of the Regular Army had ever led such bodies of troops, even at peace strength, in peace-time maneuvers; with the handling of the large units of the 1917 organization, they had no more than the textbook acquaintance possessed by any junior. Whatever their native ability and long service in all ranks, the American generals in France were, in the main, without experience as field commanders. Nor could the Regular Army supply enough general officers for armies of the size contemplated in the Expeditionary Force, even though a great many senior field officers received temporary advancement to the rank of brigadier or major-general; even though it was assumed that all so promoted were competent to command brigades or divisions in the field. It was feared also that the war would produce a number of so-called "political generals," like those of the Civil War, under whom the new armies would be saddled with amiable but probably incompetent officers in posts of high responsibility. How to meet, then, this possible weakness in High Command? The answer was believed to be found in the creation and thorough training of a large body of picked, energetic, General Staff officers. These surrounding the General could not only assist him, but also could direct him, should his native skill or good fortune ever desert him. A good staff could save the General from obvious mistakes and the troops from the hardships and losses incident to bad leadership; with a good staff, the chances of making the most of a tactical advantage, or the best of a reverse, were largely increased.

A danger in the system lay in the fact that the typical General Staff officer tended too much to regard the tactical employment, supply, and administration of troops in combat as a map-problem instead of an affair in which flesh-and-blood, the weather, morale, and the condition of the ground bore all-important parts. Too many field orders were based on what a map indicated rather than on what the real country and the roads presented. Too many field orders directed operations which the text-books, staff manual, and map all would agree in prescribing and approving, but which exhaustion of the troops, the death of a trusted leader, hunger, or fields deep in mud—elements unknown to or disregarded by the staff officer drafting the order — rendered impossible of execution from the start. The Staff tended to abide by a formula; the line mistrusted all knowledge save that based on intimacy with present conditions. The Staff complained justly that the line exercised independent judgment, with resulting confusion; the line asserted that the Staff issued orders which were arrant nonsense — and here also there were facts to prove the assertion. In the Twenty-Sixth Division, however, as has been noted, this danger of mutual misunderstanding was largely dispersed by the close friendships between officers of both branches, mutual trust, and a common effort to solve a difficulty. Division Headquarters had no reason, for instance, for dictating to the artillery or engineers; field orders affecting the infantry were based on accurate knowledge of what the infantry could do.

And the soundness of the general system, whatever the local mistakes, is incontestable. That business-like methods, sound knowledge of theory, wide vision, energy, and tact are elements in the conduct of troops in the field quite as important as courage, patience, and quick thinking, is recognized everywhere. To capitalize these qualities was the object of the General Staff training, all the way through.

To train competent assistants and understudies for staff duties, there were detailed to Division Headquarters at this time, and later, a considerable number of junior officers from line organizations. It was the belief of the Division Commander that officers who had served in the field with troops in subordinate positions were best qualified to work, later, in staff positions. And this principle was pursued throughout the Division's tour of service. After each major engagement there were attached for longer or shorter periods to Headquarters, two or three lieutenants or captains who had done well in the strain of work with their platoons or batteries, in action.

Important changes in officers of the Staff, between April and June, included the substitution of Major W. Krueger for Major A. A. Maybach, as Assistant Chief of Staff, G–3, who in turn was succeeded by Lieutenant-Colonel W. S. Bowen. Captain the Reverend M. J. O'Connor, formerly chaplain of the 101st Infantry, became Divisional Chaplain. The work of the Division Adjutant's office was simplified by the appointment of a Personnel Adjutant, while similar officers (in charge of service records, pay, casualty and sick reports, and the like) were assigned to each Regimental Headquarters. The intelligence service was also put on a most satisfactory basis, the entire work of obtaining information of the enemy, from patrols to balloon observation, from listening-posts to examination of prisoners, being carefully organized from a central authority (Assistant Chief of Staff, G–2), by whom reports were collated, information analyzed, and daily bulletins issued. A similar duty, applying to operations, was performed by the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–3, from close daily contact with the front line, daily reports, and frequent personal inspections. Every day, also, saw the Division Commander well forward, often in the most advanced positions, to secure first-hand information of the daily situation of his infantry, artillery, and machine-gunners. Improvement was made with respect to both the artillery and transport animals, though at all times — as commonly in the Expeditionary Force — it was necessary to contend against the twofold problem of inadequate numbers and indifferent condition. About the time the Division entered the La Reine (Boucq) Sector, several small issues of French draft stock were received; and then it was that the infection of French mange began to spread seriously. Successful efforts were made, however, to check the disease. A dipping vat was erected at Sanzey, in charge of the Mobile Veterinary Unit; and here all horses and mules were plunged in an antiseptic bath, at least four times. And this treatment, combined with efficient grooming and clipping and improved stabling, had the effect of practically stamping out the mange before the Division left the sector. The problem was complicated, however, by the difficulty of obtaining good, well-drained horse standings or sufficient forage.

About this time also was organized the Division "show," to borrow a term from the British. The experience of the latter had taught that a good vaudeville or comedy troupe, presenting a lively stage entertainment, was a very valuable asset in every division. And so the Twenty-Sixth, in accordance with orders from higher authority, was early in creating such an organization out of the talent available in its ranks. The "YD Show" grew and prospered, first under the direction of Captain A. L. Forde, later under Lieutenant J. P. King. Its first performance was held on June 27, in the municipal theater at Toul, the affair being enlivened by the enemy having chosen that evening for a bombing raid on the city. Again and again, the "show" proved a great help in bringing an hour of laughter to the troops, often in time of greatest strain.

CHAPTER X

THE AFFAIRS OF MAY AND JUNE

MOST of May passed uneventfully, so far as encounters with the enemy were concerned. No activities on either side were marked in the daily operations reports, save occasional clashes of patrols. There was considerable activity in the air; on several occasions enemy planes released small paper balloons which, falling to earth, were found to contain most unimpressive propaganda. Great efforts were made by our people to secure prisoners, the ambushes being laid for this purpose almost every night in such localities as Bois des Elfes (Wood of the Elves), which, like so many other sinister, black holes along the battle fronts, seemed to rejoice in the quaint inappropriateness of its charming name.

But one should understand just what is meant by the technical term "quiet sector," which the La Reine (Boucq) Sector is officially credited with being. The phrase is employed simply to designate those parts of the battle front where operations of importance are not being undertaken. "Quiet" does not, by any means, imply absence of hostile action. There were certain sectors in the Vosges where neither side was active for weeks, it is true; but the calm of those regions must not be taken as extending to fronts like the La Reine Sector. Here the "quiet" was, to say the least, relative. The casualty figures for April, May, and June, those months when the Twenty-Sixth occupied this part of the line, are illustrative:

	April	*May*	*June*
Killed	148	167	89
Wounded	504	151	259
Gassed	250	226	875
Missing	162	57	3
Total casualties	1064	601	1226

The laconic bulletins sent daily to the War Department by the Commander-in-Chief concerning the Division are also interesting as throwing light on life in a quiet sector. Following are examples from the *communiqués* of June:

> *June* 1, 1918. Twenty-Sixth Division, May 31st to June 1st, noon to noon. General impression quiet. Total of hostile shells 1060. Enemy apparently using a 15-centimeter heavy field howitzer.
>
> *June* 16, 1918. Twenty-Sixth Division, June 13th to June 14th, noon to noon; there was little activity of any description. The hostile batteries used about 1000 shells of which about 250 contained gas. The enemy planes were fairly active, a total of 21 being seen. Of these 13 were within our territory. Our patrols were very active and on several occasions drew rifle and grenade fire from the hostile trenches.
>
> *June* 23, 1918. Twenty-Sixth Division, June 20th to June 21st, noon to noon; hostile artillery still active but less so than during last few days. Intermittent shelling of the entire sector throughout afternoon and evening with heaviest fire concentrated on right and center. On the left Xivray bombarded with high explosives and gas. Total number of shells used 1800.
>
> *June* 24, 1918. Twenty-Sixth Division, June 21st to June 22d, noon to noon; the day was quiet except for a rather heavy harassing fire executed by the hostile batteries. A total of 1450 rounds, mostly small caliber including a little gas, were used by the enemy. The fire was distributed over most of the Sector.
>
> *June* 26, 1918. Twenty-Sixth Division: Daily average 1800 rounds. Maximum for one day 6000 rounds, fired on June 19th. Minimum for one day 300 rounds, fired on June 21st.

Not till May 27 did any important event occur in the comparative monotony above described.

It has been noted that the line held by the Division was extended easterly to include Jury Wood and Hazelle Wood near Flirey, where we relieved the French. The first troops to occupy the new sub-sector were the 101st Infantry, with Headquarters in Bernecourt.[1] And on the very night when these changes in disposition were being made, the enemy broke his long silence. Late in the afternoon of May 26 batteries of the 101st Field Artillery allocated to the new sub-sector were taken to their new positions and quickly registered; and scarcely had the front-line infantry battalion[1] entered the outpost trenches that same night, relieving the French, even before the men had unslung their packs, when the Germans sent over a raid. A party about 125 strong, from the 100th Regiment, Fortieth Division, newly arrived from the Russian front, advanced against our lines in Humbert Plantation from a ravine opposite Flirey, at 2 A.M., May 27. They came on singing. Under excellent artillery protection they worked along in two groups, the one driving straight at our front, the other endeavoring to enter our trenches in flank and rear. But the raiders accomplished nothing beyond the infliction of slight losses (three killed; several wounded). And since, in exchange, they left twenty dead behind, as well as two wounded prisoners, it could hardly be said that the operation was a complete success from a German standpoint. The affair was over in a few minutes, the enemy simply making a dash into our lines and a quick withdrawal. The most notable feature, perhaps, was the prompt and efficient support given by our artillery, which had been taken into the sub-sector so short a time before the enemy's attack developed. Remarkable, too, in a sense, was the heavy fire of both artillery and machine guns which the enemy laid down on the Humbert Plantation trenches continually for two days following the raid. It seemed in some of its phases like the "counter-preparation" fire which is delivered on an adversary who is about to start an attack; and one wondered what the Germans suspected our troops were planning.

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[1] The left of the sector in the vicinity of Apremont, as far as Broussey, was taken over by French Colonial troops at the same time.

What actually was in hand by way of an enterprise against the adversary was not developed at this time, nor at the place where he appears to have expected the

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[1] I/101 Infantry.

Americans to come over. Early in the month, when all was quietest, word was whispered down to the regimental commanders and their intelligence officers that minute reconnaissance should be made of the enemy defenses about Richecourt, along the stream of the Rupt de Mad. It was time our troops did something "on their own"; they must not be content to have repelled two stiff attacks and then merely stand watch over their defenses. They must not lose the spirit of enterprise and initiative, which alone makes fighting men.

After days of reconnaissance both aerial and by patrols, study of photographs, efforts to gain complete knowledge of the Richecourt defenses, it was given out, under cover of the deepest secrecy, that a large raid was going to be launched against the unsuspecting garrison of that particular hornets' nest. From the 101st Infantry were chosen three hundred volunteers under Major J. F. Hickey; in their support were detailed detachments of engineers, signal and medical troops; reconnaissance and observation were assured by detachments from the 1st Aero Squadron, 94th Pursuit Squadron, and 2d Balloon Company. The usual mission was assigned — namely, to make prisoners and destroy defenses.

Near Aulnois was laid out a replica of the section of enemy trenches it was proposed to raid, together with a plan of approaches; and here the raiding party was repeatedly rehearsed. Every individual was shown his particular duty; each squad and platoon was drilled by day and night, till both approaches and defense lines were perfectly familiar. The engineers with their bengalore torpedoes for breaching the wire, the signalmen with wire reels and telephones, the infantry with grenades, incendiary bombs, trench knives, clubs, and pistols — all knew the location of dugout, shelter, machine-gun emplacement, or command post, and what to do when they got to it. Artillery, backed by the heavier guns of the Corps, arranged an elaborate fire of preparation, counter-battery, and neutralization, to be followed by a rolling barrage and "encaging fire" for the immediate protection of the raiders. The enemy in and about Lahayville, some eleven hundred yards to the northeast of Richecourt, down the valley, was to be deluged with gas as soon as the attack was fairly under way. The approach was to be made from Seicheprey in a northwest direction across the sub-sector occupied by the 102d Infantry, for some five hundred yards to Richecourt, where a bridge over the Rupt de Mad was to be destroyed.

So far, so good. The preparations were approved by the Corps, were made complete and painstaking. Everything necessary for the success of the raid had been worked out with the greatest forethought. Everything? Hardly that. For without secrecy the prospect of a raid's succeeding is nothing at all; and news of this Richecourt enterprise leaked far and wide and early. War correspondents heard of it and flocked to Beaumont, which had been designated as the place from which the raid was to be directed. Operations officers and observers from Corps and Division crowded the dugout occupied by the 102d Infantry Headquarters. There was a stir of troops all through the little villages close behind the front, like Mandres and Ansauville. In the early hours of the long twilight a German observation plane, swooping down recklessly close, directly over the raiding party where it was assembled for the march, took a long look which must have told the observer all he wished to know.

Exactly at eleven on the appointed night the infantry and supporting troops were on the parallel of departure, where it had been outlined with tape on the marshy grassland west of Seicheprey. And exactly then, too, began the artillery preparation. In the starlit, windless night, the spectacle was wonderful, indeed — the horizon ringed with flame, the air alive with the shrill whine of the climbing shells. For three hours the bombardment lasted. Then, at two o'clock, the barrage was started, and away went the raiders close behind it. Exactly on schedule the rocket flared up signaling "objective reached." The men methodically proceeded about their work of bombing the bridge, the German dugouts, and seeking prisoners. With only one killed and two seriously wounded, the party coursed through the Richecourt trenches, meeting no resistance, and inflicting a loss on the enemy of at least forty killed and wounded. And the raiders got one prisoner — a lad of sixteen, the worst-scared boy on the whole Western Front that night, together with a machine gun and some other material of less value. Elated and excited, as only successful troops can be, the party returned — nor was it noticed that many were coughing in a way that boded ill. But a few hours sufficed to bring to light the other side of the picture. A complete success, so far as smooth operation and accomplished mission were concerned, the "million-dollar raid," so called from the vast expenditure of artillery ammunition, contributed to the Division's education two points which cost rather dearly. The first was that the normal garrison of an outpost line like that at Richecourt, warned in advance of an impending raid, is drawn away before the attack is launched, so that the raiders can make at best only an insignificant haul of prisoners. There appears to be little doubt but what Hickey's men were expected; the attempts at secrecy, when the raid was in preparation, came to naught. The second point was taught by the fact that hardly a man of the raiding party escaped the effects of the gas released on Lahayville, one thousand yards away, by our artillery. The distance was believed to be perfectly safe, in the judgment of experts; but some slight air current, perhaps the mere conformation of the ground, was sufficient to roll back the deadly gas on our own troops, who in the excitement did not perceive its presence. A searching investigation followed this mishap which exonerated the artillery; but this could not restore the scores of men who had suffered.

For any of a dozen reasons, however, the enemy must not be allowed any repose. It was not enough to harass him with artillery fire, to annoy his outposts by daring patrols, or even to do him such damage as was accomplished in the raid of May 30. He must be made to feel that the Americans were vigilant, aggressive, dangerous. Consequently, a new attack was sent against his lines within a week after the Richecourt affair. This time the secret was well kept. In Jury Wood, opposite a salient of the German line which girdled the wicked depths of Sonnard Wood, was installed at vast labor a battery of projectors in charge of the Gas and Flame Regiment — mysterious fellows, of whom one always expected the newest and the deadliest methods of warfare. Some ninety of these devices were tucked away in the underbrush, each ready to shoot many pounds of gas in the form of a projectile with a time fuse, all fired together, and intended to smother Sonnard Wood with its nests of field guns and assembly places. For some nights, however, the weather conditions were unfavorable; but just before dawn on June 6 our troops were drawn back from the forward lines in Jury Wood, under protection of a covering force, and the projectors were fired. Heavy, indeed, was the enemy loss, for, as was learned later, the deadly gas fell full on an infantry battalion moving in. Just what the German plans were for that morning has never been ascertained. Some operation was intended — there had been unmistakable sounds of new work in the forward trenches; officers were seen on reconnaissance; in the recesses of ominous Sonnard Wood more than one unaccustomed movement had been detected. Only a short hour before our gas attack was sent over, a German combat patrol made a sudden descent on our lines in Remières Wood, held by a company of the 102d Infantry, only a few yards from the edge of the zone exposed to the gas. They came with *flammenwerfer*, but only got themselves killed for their pains. Only in one place did they get close enough to squirt a jet of the liquid fire from the reservoirs they carried on their backs, and even here no damage was done, the wretched man who carried the reservoir being quickly pistoled. But, as if in revenge, the enemy artillery awoke to renewed life. For three days the front and all communications were subjected to most persistent attentions. The usual rumor ran about that a large attack was being prepared, and all plans were made to meet it; but nothing developed. Again was manifested the tendency of the enemy to expend quantities of costly ammunition in what seemed purposeless enterprises, so often observed while the Division was in the La Reine (Boucq) Sector. Three days he fired peevishly, and then again a relative quiet descended. The chief damage he did, aside from inflicting a few casualties, was to explode a regimental grenade and pyrotechnic dump at Beaumont by a direct hit — which made an evening of not a little excitement even for the hardened dwellers in that chosen village — which, like the dust-heaps of Seicheprey, was invariably bombarded at all the usual bombarding hours.

For another week life was peaceful. It was "a good war." The weather continued warm and clear, day after day; living conditions in the trenches were vastly bettered — the Jury Wood sub-sector being especially well organized, although Hazelle Wood, adjoining it, was a favorite target for sudden, heavy bursts of harassing fire. The cooking and distribution of rations was greatly improved; mail began to come more regularly; the troops had not only become wonted to the life, but were thriving on it; some replacements had been also received. True, there was a steady toll taken by shell-fire or sniping — but this was accepted as part of the routine. Every day there were air-fights to watch, or the daring efforts of the airmen to pass the barrier fire of the "archies"; in which contests the honors appeared to be about even. June 16, however, the peace was broken by another German raid, very like the one launched against Seicheprey two months before.

For this objective he selected the twin villages of Xivray-Marvoisin, on the left of the divisional sector. His mission probably did not go beyond making prisoners, to accomplish which purpose he sent over a force of some 500 *Landwehr* and line troops backed by 80 men from a *Sturmbataillon*, with the support of 40 pioneers and 20 flame-throwers, The main duty of the latter was to hide the advance under cover of a smoke screen.

The two villages, of which the Marvoisin hamlet stood advanced by some three hundred yards, very close to the enemy lines, and the trench system connecting them, were held by a battalion (III) of the 103d Infantry and the 103d Machine-Gun Battalion — the former having a platoon in Xivray proper, with two companies near at hand in Bouconville, outposts in Marvoisin, and platoons in various flanking local centers of resistance.

The attack began with a twenty-minute artillery "preparation" laid, as usual, on the objective, communications, and support positions. This was as violent a fire as any the Division had experienced; and, with its character changed to a fire of destruction, it was continued long after the raid was over. The enemy was divided into three columns, and each of these was again subdivided into three smaller groups, a part of whom drove straight at Marvoisin from the front, while the remainder attempted to work into Xivray from the flanks, on east and west, all under cover of a heavy morning mist.

But a sturdy resistance by the troops on the ground, together with an immediate counter-attack by a platoon of the companies from Bouconville, broke down the enemy's effort almost at once. While his artillery fire, in which heavy *minenwerfer* participated, did cause casualties, especially near Marvoisin,[1] his infantry accomplished practically nothing. Plans for the defense of the position, worked out in great detail by Brigadier-General Cole, in command of the brigade, were as exactly followed as if at maneuver; the crews of the forward machine guns stuck manfully to their work through the heaviest fire. The German discomfiture was complete. Some sixty of their dead were counted in front of our wire, scores were carried away; and they left ten prisoners, three light machine guns, flame-throwers, and quantities of equipment in the hands of our troops.

Again, as if to wreak revenge for their repulse, the Germans laid down furious bursts of artillery fire over all the Division area throughout the day, and at intervals for three or four days later. As many as 48 shells a minute, of all calibers up to 210 millimeters, fell on Beaumont between 6.30 and 9 o'clock and again at noon of June 16. Bernecourt suffered, where officers of the 101st Infantry were wounded; in Royaumeix, Chaplain W. Danker, 104th Infantry, was killed, Colonel G. H. Shelton slightly wounded, and three enlisted men killed by a single burst. Among the horse lines at Sanzey and Cornieville, the shells did damage, while at Boucq, where Division Headquarters was established, the bombardment was so heavy on June 20, well directed by aeroplanes, that Headquarters was compelled to evacuate temporarily, going a mile farther back, to Trondes. Heavy retaliation fire was sent back by our own artillery; and gradually the activity spent itself. But while the enemy fire was at its height the back area was far from being the safe retreat which men "up front" were prone to consider it.

The last days of June, featureless save for the daily fire of our artillery and occasional air fights, were none the less thrilling. For hardly had the echoes of the Xivray-Marvoisin fight abated, before a whisper of news ran round the lines that stirred the men like an *alerte*. There appeared in the sector groups of strange officers, other than the observers who had been coming up regularly from the schools for periods of instruction. Extra stores of travel rations were collected ready for issue; revised inventories of permanent trench stores were ordered in each sub-sector — materials for accessory defenses, rubber boots, signaling devices, munitions, trench rations, and the like. And from other evidences, plainly to be read, it appeared that the relief of the Division was finally at hand.

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[1] Losses in this affair included: 103d Infantry, 26 killed, 96 wounded, 47 gassed; 103d Machine-Gun Battalion, 2 killed, 11 wounded.

Several changes in command had been effected during the weeks just past. Of these, the most important occurred in the artillery. The command of the brigade (51st F.A.) passed from Brigadier-General Lassiter to Brigadier-General D. W. Aultman on May 9; and in the 103d Regiment (155-mm. howitzers) Colonel E. T. Smith was succeeded on June 15 by Colonel P. D. Glassford, soon to prove himself one of the most conspicuous and able officers the Division ever possessed. It may be said at this point, indeed, that the artillery brigade had been singularly rich in its officer personnel from the very beginning. The battery commanders and the Brigade Staff were all exceptionally capable; while the spirit and skill of the enlisted men, together with their aptness in learning the technical operation of the French material, earned highest praise. Never, it appears, did the artillery of the Division fail to surpass expectations — to do more than was required of it. It was never necessary for the Division Staff to do more than indicate the mission, destination, or duty of the gunners. Performance was invariably prompt, efficient, and workmanlike. The brigade had no need of detailed orders, fussy supervision, constant inspection. Proud of its record, aware of its own efficiency, it worked on honor — and never once fell below its own highest standards, which were those of the best troops anywhere.

While its most showy work was to come later, the performance of the artillery in the La Reine (Boucq) Sector was noteworthy, indeed. The study and practice of the Chemin des Dames was translated daily into actual service of the most effective sort. Divided into two general groupings, the brigade's mission, briefly, was to act with the right and left infantry units, each in the defense of half the front. On every occasion, often within a few seconds after receiving, by rocket or telephone, the infantry's call for barrage, the guns replied with a will. On every raid, or to meet unforeseen emergencies, the artillery performed special firing missions with an entire success, due partly to the skill with which the firing data were handled, partly to the energy of the gunners and the fellows who handled ammunition. But, further than this regular duty of all divisional artillery in sector, the brigade took over the operation of four batteries of "position pieces" — guns of 90- and 95-millimeter caliber, remaining permanently in the sector; and it furnished, moreover, several "gypsy pieces," or "roving guns," the command of which was the dream of many a young officer. Accompanied by a truck-load of ammunition, a "rover" would establish itself at night here and there in the sector, usually well forward, open fire from an unsuspected direction on selected targets, and then trundle away in the darkness before the enemy had time to locate the piece or seek to neutralize it. Another, and not unimportant, activity of the gunners was to support with their fire, on four different occasions, the operations of French divisions, in the Corps, to right or left.

The spirit, skill, and discipline which made the artillery so valuable were inherited intact from the original Massachusetts and Connecticut batteries which formed its nucleus. Upon this fine foundation such leaders as Lassiter, Sherburne, Goodwin, Herbert, and Twachtman built strongly and well, while Keville did likewise with the ammunition train. The brigade which General Aultman inherited, early in May, was in all respects the equal of any American artillery in France.

Changes had come also in the command of the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion. Major J. Perrins was succeeded on April 9 by Captain D. T. Gallup, who, in turn, was supplanted by Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) J. D. Murphy, on April 18. Originally the machine-gun officer of the 101st Infantry, Major Murphy was to gain distinction for courage and ability, and to carry the responsibilities which come usually to the lot of officers many years his senior. The 101st Field Signal Battalion received as successive commanders Major S. W. Walmsley (April 29) and Major P. W. Evans (June 19).

The Division had been in the line since the first week of February, except for about a week during the march from the Chemin des Dames. Leaves had been out of the question; rest and recreation, even, had been very sketchy. For all officers the strain had been unbroken. It is true that the men looked very fit; but they were tired after one hundred and thirty days of continuous service, all but a week of which had been spent exposed to enemy fire. They were exceedingly pleased with themselves; they deserved the congratulations given them by the French; they had won the respect of their German opponents, as captured enemy officers themselves admitted. These war-seasoned fellows would not have known themselves for the lads who were still learning war six months earlier. But, none the less, when advance parties of a new division actually came into the sector, they received from all ranks of the Twenty-Sixth the heartiest of welcomes.

The American newcomers were units of the Eighty-Second Division, fresh from preliminary training in the British area near Abbéville, behind Amiens, who had begun their movement on June 16. Without artillery, machine guns, and one regiment of infantry, they also lacked all experience of life in the enemy's presence; they also were without much necessary equipment. But as the Americans were supplemented by the 154th French Division (less one regiment), at least the full force necessary for the garrisoning of the sector was available.

The relief began on the night of June 24. One by one the battalions and batteries gave place to their successors, in perfect order. So many times had the Division effected interior reliefs that the process had by now become simple enough, even on a large scale; and the changes were made easily. A novel feature was that a large proportion of the infantry was taken out of the sector in *décauvilles,* or cars of the narrow-gauge steam tramway which threaded all the rear area, from Ansauville back to Menil-la-Tour and Toul itself. A most satisfactory feature of the operation was that, although as many as 58,000 men were in motion at one time on the nights of the relief, apparently no hint of the movement reached the enemy, and thus no delay from German activity or other cause occurred to interrupt it. On June 28, at nine o'clock, the command passed. An hour later, Division Headquarters opened in Toul; and the troops were concentrated near by, in the general area Villey-Saint-Etienne – Francheville – Foug – Chaudneney – Velaine-en-Haye.

CHAPTER XI

TO THE CHAMPAGNE-MARNE DEFENSIVE

LESS than twelve hours after the relief of the Division orders came for a move. They were not wholly unexpected. The unusual accumulation and issue of travel rations had set speculation going. The concentration of the troops in close proximity to a principal railway at Toul, and the obviously temporary billet and cantonment accommodations, made it plain that no extended stay was contemplated. Indeed, it was as soon as June 30 that the troops began entraining in and near Toul for what the orders announced was to be a "journey of twelve hours' duration."

It was truly a secret move. No destination was even guessed at. Even the troop train commanders knew no more than that Troyes was the first "regulating station" or junction where the trains would be given their final time schedules and destinations. It was hoped that Troyes might at least reveal whether the train turned southward, which might mean Italy, or north, which meant, perhaps, a chance of joining the British. Visionaries proclaimed that Paris, with a street parade on the Fourth of July, was the goal. Only a few, whose memories of the war map of the Marne Valley were fresh, had a suspicion of what was really in store.

For considerably more than the estimated twelve hours the troop trains trundled westward. It was perfect summer weather, with the sheen of yellow wheat in the sun along the valleys and larks high in the air. One seemed to be leaving war behind. And when finally the trains drew into Noisy-le-Sec, which the maps said was a Paris suburb, and when one actually saw motor-busses with Paris street names on their signs, there rose one happy sigh from head to rear of each battalion. One waits for orders from the R.T.O., or the regulating officer. They come presently and give strange names as destinations — Meaux, Trilport. Where on earth are they? Again the map, and one has a kind of vision unfolded. For Meaux and Trilport are on a bend of the Marne, near where the little river Ourcq joins it from the north. And there along the Marne, in Château-Thierry and Dormans, only a dozen miles away, the mighty German VIII Army under Von Boehn is gathering itself for another tiger-spring which should secure him the crossings of the river.

At dawn one descends from the train; the billeting parties are there to show the way, and the troops move out, to establish themselves by the night of July 2 in the area Tancrou-Germigny – Mareuil-les-Meaux – Quincy – Villemareuil–Changis. Division Headquarters opened in Nanteuil-les-Meaux. Not a Fourth-of-July celebration was in store, nor yet a jaunt to Italy. To anybody able to read a map, to anybody who had followed the daily sweep of the German hosts down from the heights of the Aisne since May 27, between Rheims and Compiègne, the work in store for the Division was evident enough. No longer the garrison of a Lorraine sector still learning war by raid, patrol, and local bombardment, but trusted with a part in the scene of greatest activity was now the Division's fortune. What its other American comrades had done it was expected to accomplish. The brilliant success of the First Division at Cantigny (May 9); the steady courage of the Third, on the Marne at Château-Thierry (June 4), by which the German was refused a foothold on the southern bank; the valorous charges of the Marines in Belleau Wood, the work of the 9th and 23d Infantry in the neighboring Vaux and Bouresches (June 11–13) — all these feats of arms were for the Twenty-Sixth to emulate, before the eyes of the world. Two of its fellow National Guard divisions were not far away, also in the "big show." The Forty-Second (Rainbow Division) was a unit in the Fourth French Army under Gouraud, holding the gate of Champagne, while the Twenty-Eighth (Pennsylvania) was in the same neighborhood as the New England troops.

By July 4 the Division began to move up to the line. Advantage was taken of a temporary lull in the fighting on the sector of front just to the northwest of Château-Thierry, where the Second Division [1] had been heavily engaged, to effect the gradual relief of its weary, battered units. The artillery first went into position and began firing on July 8. The infantry followed, one regiment at a time, as the situation warranted risking a change in the front-line dispositions. The 52d Infantry Brigade took over from the gallant Marine Brigade the ground the latter had won and held so splendidly in Belleau Wood and in front of Torcy, as far to the left (northwest) as Bussiares; the 51st Infantry Brigade relieved the 9th Infantry in the vicinity of Vaux, and the 23d Infantry at Bouresches. Division Headquarters moved up to Chamigny, then to Genevrois Farm, where also was the artillery, the infantry Brigade Headquarters being established at Domptin (51st) and La Loge Farm (52d). By July 9 the relief was completed, and the Division was on the battle front.

To the extent of line taken over from the Second Division had been given the designation of "Pas Fini Sector," and there was a ring of stubborn defiance in the name which promised well; "unfinished" the struggle still was. For though the French had given ground steadily before the German onslaughts, from Soissons to the Marne, though a renewal of the German attacks was expected to begin not later than July 15, there still remained alive the belief that the battle was very far from being decided in Ludendorff's favor. Not yet had he broken the forces in the field. The French retreat, though extensive, had been made in good order; more than once the advancing Germans had been checked by smashing counter-attacks; and confidence abounded that Foch, the master of war, had plans which would bring ultimate success.

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[1] 9th and 23d Infantry; 5th and 6th Marines.

The German intentions were well known. Apparently the enemy was so confident of success that he took no pains to insure the effect of surprise. For five or six weeks, during most of June and the first of July, he attempted no important move, collecting his forces for one final onslaught — the so-called "*Friedensturm*" — which was to bring about the Allies' final downfall. An "army of pursuit" (IX Army, under Von Carlowitz) was brought from the Eastern Front and collected near Soissons, to follow up initial successes. The French line was to be broken by Von Boehn on the Marne, who should cut the great Paris–Nancy railway; the armies of Von Below (I) and Von Einem (III) were to effect another breach east of Rheims; and at the same time Von Hutier and Von der Marwitz were to separate for good the French and British on the front between Amiens and Montdidier. These tasks accomplished, the combined forces would move toward Paris down the Marne Valley and from the north — a grandiose plan, indeed, to which the German successes of the past weeks gave a semblance of feasibility. How Foch, by a counter-stroke of supreme audacity, brought the plan to naught; how the Twenty-Sixth Division shared daily in the first week of that fighting between Aisne and Marne which definitely turned the tide of war, will be told in its place. First we have to look at the Division, crouched for the spring, along the line of Vaux, Bouresches, and Belleau Wood, just above Château-Thierry.

It was a rolling, lovely land under the hot midsummer sun, a country of broad wheat-fields interspersed with extensive woods and coppices. Across the front ran a little railway, the embankment of which, together with the cuttings at Vaux and Bouresches, was a tactical feature of interest. On the right the sector was dominated by Hill 204, most of which was in German hands, while the possession of Belleau Wood, cresting a hill with a steep scarp toward the enemy, gave us an advantageous position on the left. Certain farms like Thiolet, Triangle, or Paris, together with the villages of Lucy-le-Bocage and Coupru, afforded points for Battalion and Regimental Headquarters, while the concealment of Bezu Woods was utilized for the kitchens and wagon trains. Guns were everywhere. The veriest novice in war must have known that only some exceptionally important object could explain the presence in every wood and dug into every roadside, of so much artillery and then more artillery. For ten nights after the Division took its post the guns were steadily coming in, all through the dark hours. It speaks well for the care and skill of all concerned that apparently the enemy had no intimation of the concentration being prepared against him.

Not that he was inactive. His infantry was quiet enough, but his gunners made life very hard for all hands at the front. There were no trenches, little wire, no shelters, even of the sketchiest sort; the men sought safety in shallow "fox-holes" scratched to a depth of a foot or two and lightly covered with brushwood. The infantry defense plan consisted of reciprocally flanking centers of resistance, together with the numerous machine guns which were laid to deliver a most intricate barrage across the whole front. As before, there were established an outpost line and a principal resistance line; but an interesting feature in the Pas Fini Sector was that the echelonment of all infantry and machine guns in extreme depth was especially insisted on, to insure flexibility and ease of maneuver. So marked was this that, behind the outpost line was traced a zone extending across the whole sector and one thousand meters broad, in which no troops at all were stationed. This was a secondary artillery barrage zone, for the protection of the principal resistance line, designed to break up any attack which should overrun the outposts. The latter had the usual mission — to fight to the last man without hope of reinforcement. The counter-attacks on successful enemy groups by platoons on the ground, designated for that purpose, supplied another feature of the general defensive plan. As has been said, the whole scheme of things was based on the supposition that the Division was occupying a position in readiness to ward off an expected attack in open warfare, but to take the initiative at the first possible moment.

It hardly needed the reiterated reports of German prisoners and deserters to tell us that the attack was to be renewed within a few days — the activity of the enemy artillery told that plainly. At all hours the troops of the outpost line (a battalion from each of the four infantry regiments, in line) were fired on by machine guns and the lighter field pieces. Our suspected battery positions also were visited frequently, and certain stretches of highway over which traffic had to pass were never safe. It was a hard, grinding time. All food and water for troops at the front had to be carried up to them by ration details. Under cover of darkness these parties would creep forward from the kitchens and depots in Bezu Wood, carrying the heavy, sealed cans called *marmites*, each of which contained enough stew or coffee for perhaps a squad. But progress was slow in the darkness; and often it was checked altogether by *rafales* of machine-gun fire in such devilish stretches as the ravine leading up to Bouresches or that near Lucy-le-Bocage behind Belleau Wood. The condition of the food can be imagined, carried about in hot summer weather, churned by the rough journey into slush. A large number of casualties resulted from gas. The woods in which the forward companies were collected against observation were frequently dosed heavily with mustard, as also such traps as the villages along the forward area. The numerical strength of both infantry and machine-gun units was impaired to a degree which aroused not a little concern.

It is not unlikely that the traditionally sinister character of Belleau Wood had a certain effect on the morale of the troops stationed there. Apart from the hourly peril of the place, with its constant visitations from shell-fire, gas, and machine-gun bursts, the woods in themselves were full of horror. Where the 5th and 6th Marines had battled valiantly in June was in July a haunted place of dread. Shapeless fragments of what once were men hung in the jagged branches of the trees, blown there by shells; stiffened shapes were found by the new troops, lying still unburied where they had fallen before German machine-gun nests, in the rocky hollows. A grisly odor of death hung heavy in the summer air around the stone hunting lodge near the eastern skirts of the woods, and men there came to move and talk as when they know that ghosts are watching them.

At Bouresches and Vaux there were not infrequent clashes between patrols, and other activities of a more serious character. The village of Bouresches itself was in American hands, but the railway station, some two hundred yards distant and separated by a narrow ravine from the town, had been turned into a miniature *fortin* by the enemy. Machine guns and trench mortars, most cleverly disposed in the little ravine, constantly annoyed the Bouresches garrison, and more than one attempt was made both by artillery concentrations and raiding parties, to clear the place out. But nothing was accomplished. Along the Belleau–Bussiares sub-sector on the left of the line, there occurred little or nothing in the way of local aggressive work for the fortnight following the arrival of the Division on this front. Orders were strict against the troops exposing themselves; all their strength was being reserved for the grand attack in preparation; but had it not been for a brisk little fight in Vaux, one would incline to think, for once, the infantry's fighting edge was a bit dulled from the

VAUX

continued harassment of the enemy fire, the strain of anticipation, scanty food, and temporary inability to retaliate on a foe who appeared especially aggressive and well served by his aeroplanes.

The incident at Vaux, however, revived all spirits. This stricken heap of stones, lying under the shoulder of Hill 204, and commanded by high ground to the east, belonged in the charge of the 101st Infantry, on the extreme right of the sector. Only sentry posts were kept there by day, but at night platoons moved in, covering the town and the railway. On the night of July 13–14, the little garrison was subjected to a very heavy fire, both high-explosive and gas, lasting upwards of four hours. At dawn of the 14th the platoons started to go back to their regular day positions; and observers, seeing groups coming down into Vaux from the high ground, believed the latter to be a platoon of the Americans. As a consequence, the groups — who happened to be Germans — were not disturbed, and proceeded to occupy both the village and the railway station with machine guns. Promptly, however, the Vaux detachment of the 101st Infantry, under Lieutenants W. Fitzgerald, E. J. Price, and J. Rose, advanced to dislodge the intruders, on orders from Regimental Headquarters. Aided by an effective box barrage of our artillery, which was dropped behind and around Vaux in order to cut off the German's way out, the Boston infantry proceeded to oust the enemy from the village most methodically. The railway station and an adjoining line of shell craters were the principal objectives, where the Germans had installed several machine guns, but the station was cleared very rapidly. Gaining by hook or crook a point of vantage close under the walls, clear of the machine-gun fire, a group from "K" Company tossed grenades over the roofless walls, thus driving out the gun crews, who, as they ran, were fired on by automatic-rifle men. Private D. Ross captured, single-handed, a machine gun which had been set up in one of the village streets; small parties cleared out the enemy riflemen the length of the railway embankment and the shell holes; many were shot down as they retreated to the cover of the woods; and the whole was conducted with very small losses and the capture of eighteen prisoners. Early in the evening a German artillery bombardment, which had all the characteristics of "preparation fire," came down again on the lines about Vaux. On the edge of the woods a body of his infantry was discerned deploying for attack. But his demonstration — whatever its intention — was not pressed. Promptly taken under heavy fire from both the artillery and the rifles of our infantry, the German formation dispersed in some disorder.

But the incident, like all movements or actions in war, must be considered only in connection with other activities of the moment. No action is isolated, unrelated, without bearing on a general plan; there is no minor enterprise, no troop movement by any unit of a large force which does not receive its impetus and derive its character as merely a link in the great chain of events being forged by the master-smiths. To the 101st Infantry, snarling and snapping at the troublesome foe in front of it, the Vaux affair seemed at the time entirely localized; but actually this display of German energy, such as it was, must be considered as intended to attain a definite object as part of the renewed attacks of Von Boehn on a large scale along the Marne, which were fully developed on the following day.

July 15 Von Boehn commenced in earnest the long-awaited movement. That day the armies of Von Mudra and Von Einem flung themselves at Gouraud east of Rheims, in Champagne. That day, while the Germans fatally deepened their Marne salient between Fossoy and Clairizet, the American Third Division at Fossoy, at Vaux (on the Marne), and in Château-Thierry, forbade the foe to widen it; and farther east, the Germans never reached

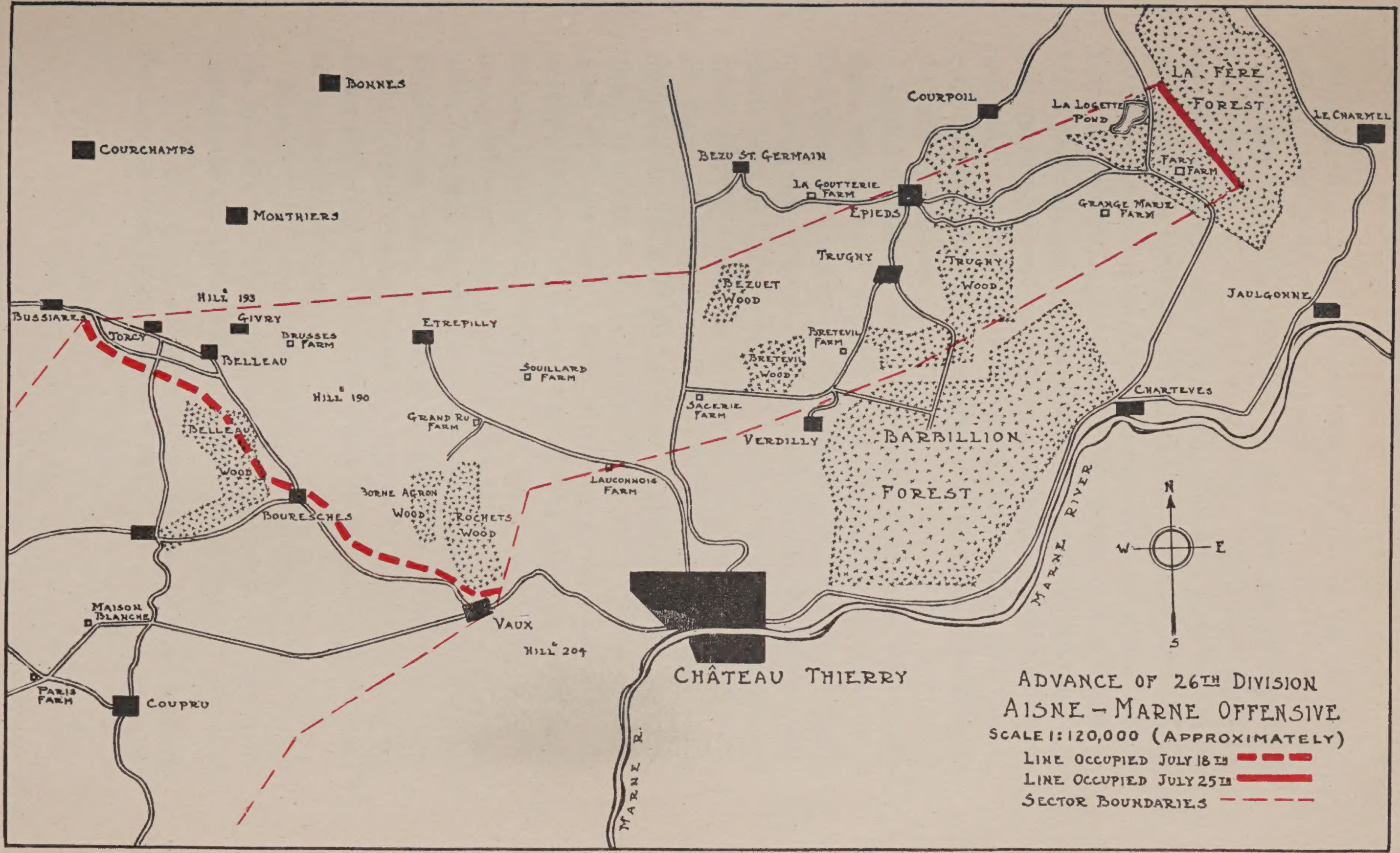
Gouraud's main battle zone. On the 16th and 17th more ground was won south of the river, where now the Germans had pushed forward eight divisions; but the important ridges stayed in French hands and the French artillery commanded the river crossings. Committed to follow up his advance to the south, the enemy had left his right flank dangerously exposed on the (Soissons–Château-Thierry) side of the deep salient. Over-extended, pinned to the ground he had won, he could not divert his reserves to meet danger from the west. The moment had come for the counter-stroke.

CHAPTER XII

THE AISNE–MARNE OFFENSIVE — FIRST PHASE

AS the Division stands to its arms, through the days of the so-called "Champagne–Marne Defensive," let us look at its situation with respect to other troops beside it. Minor changes in the positions of divisions occurred, owing to the relief of units on the line; but the order of battle on the western side of the Marne salient, after the Twenty-Sixth returned to the front, may be taken as not differing materially from that of July 15.

Away to the left, at the hinge of the salient, to the west of Soissons, the Tenth French Army was holding in front of the Forêt de l'Aigue, Compiègne, and Villers-Cotterets; its right rested on the line Crepy-en-Valois–Coyolles–Faverolles. From thence southerly to Saint-Gengolph and Vaux (inclusive) lay the Sixth French Army of Dégoutte, in which were included, from left to right, the Second French Corps (33d and 2d Divisions, French), Seventh French Corps (47th and 164th Divisions, French), and First American Corps, with the 167th (French) on the left of its line and the Twenty-Sixth on the right. Next, covering Château-Thierry and the Marne as far as Dormans, was the Thirty-Eighth French Corps, including, from left to right, the Thirty-Ninth French, Third American, 125th French Divisions. The Thirty-Ninth, which had led the first Verdun counter-attack February 26, 1916, and had advanced on the British right in the desperate doings on the Somme with magnificent dash and complete success, was immediately next to the Twenty-Sixth; and the latter, knowing itself to be brigaded on the battle front with some of the finest infantry in Europe, felt a thrill of pride in realizing that where it now held and where it was to attack



ADVANCE OF 26TH DIVISION
AISNE – MARNE OFFENSIVE
SCALE 1:120,000 (APPROXIMATELY)

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were considered points so important as to be entrusted only to troops of tried excellence.

On the left of the Division lay another unit of the First Corps — the 167th Division (French). Thorough arrangements for the exchange of information and joint action included the assignment of information officers and agents at the respective Divisional Headquarters;[1] while officers from the Corps maintained touch between the Twenty-Sixth and superior Headquarters. Communication by wire and messengers was assured; the divisional message center was carefully organized to insure the prompt and intelligent handling of all orders and other messages having to do with operations.

Important changes in command occurred during the days immediately preceding the Division's entrance into the general engagement. On July 10, Major J. L. Howard was transferred to the Division Staff as Divisional Machine-Gun Officer, being succeeded in command of the 101st Machine-Gun Battalion by Major M. G. Bulkeley, Jr. July 12 Colonel John H. Sherburne, who had commanded the 101st Field Artillery with conspicuous success, was promoted to be Brigadier-General and transferred to duty with the 167th Artillery Brigade. He continued to perform duty with his old command, however, until July 25. July 16, on the very eve of the attack, the 51st Infantry Brigade underwent a change of leaders, as Brigadier-General Traub was promoted to Major-General and transferred to the command of the Thirty-Fifth Division (Missouri National Guard), his place being taken by Colonel George H. Shelton, 104th Infantry, now promoted to be Brigadier-General.

Nor did the imminence of a general engagement check the operation of the machinery by which officers and non-commissioned officers were taken out of units on the line for the sake of supplying divisions in the United States. The cardinal principle of supply — that combat forces should have no care other than the accomplishment of their battle mission — was in this case oddly reversed. Few officers were sent from the replacement depots to fill vacancies in the Twenty-Sixth; but the call on the Division's front-line battalions to help recruit training units was continual. There were moments when it required good discipline in regimental commanders to accept the wisdom of the theory that the good of the whole army, rather than that of his own unit, must be first considered under all circumstances.

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[1] To the 39th Division and the 167th Division were attached Captain R. Peters and Lieutenant J. P. King respectively.

Sharply and suddenly the time of waiting ended. July 16 there was received at Division Headquarters a memorandum from the Corps entitled: "Action to be taken by the First Corps in case of the withdrawal of the enemy." Immediately, the Division Commander called a conference of the brigadiers and others concerned; and later that day there were issued Instructions No. 74, outlining, in furtherance of the Corps' plan of action, the scope and purpose of any advance by the Division against the enemy's lines. What amounted to a warning that operations were impending was transmitted that evening to the infantry colonels: "No working parties will be sent out to-night." The eight words, under the circumstance, were eloquent, indeed.

But secrecy was imperative. The great counter-stroke was to be delivered as a complete surprise to the confident but much-extended enemy. To students of the Second Battle of the Marne, now to begin, it has been difficult to understand how Von Boehn, or the German High Command, permitted the risk involved in leaving the western side of the Château-Thierry salient exposed to Foch's blow. Between Château-Thierry and the vicinity of Soissons, Von Boehn had, on July 18, but eight divisions in line and six in reserve, surely a force slight enough for that length of line. But it may be considered probable that he far underestimated Foch's available reserves; and the "army of pursuit" under Von Carlowitz was assembled in the interior of the salient, ready for use in any direction. If a hint of Foch's intentions was wafted across the lines. through some luckless prisoner, perhaps, the Allies' difficulties would be increased enormously; and so the issue of specific attack orders had to be delayed till the last possible moment. Not till 22.15 o'clock [1] on July 17 was there received the all-important Corps order [2] for the Division's entrance into the battle. And the accompanying letter prescribed that "H" hour — the time for the forward movement to begin — was to be 4.35 o'clock on July 18.[3]

Six hours in which to draft, issue, and have executed the orders for the Division's attack! Six hours in which to notify the artillery, signalmen, machine-gunners, and trains, to dispose and form the infantry battalions for their attack, to get the connection groups in position, to insure that every commander down to company and platoon leaders knew his task! Six hours, while a torrential rain and thunderstorm helped the persistent enemy guns

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[1] The military system of designating the hours of the day by the numbers 0.00 to 24.00, instead of by the familiar A.M. and P.M. numbers, is here employed.

[2] Field Order No. 9, First Army Corps, dated July 17, 1918, 17.30 o'clock.

[3] *Headquarters First Army Corps, American E.F.*
July 17, 1918

From: Commanding General, 1st Army Corps.
To: Commanding General, 26th Division.
Subject: J day and H hour.

1. J Day is the 18th of July.
2. H hour is 4.35 o'clock.
3. No artillery fire will be permitted before 4.35 A.M., after which it is well understood that the advance will begin in order to capture the advanced posts of the enemy as stated in Field Order No. 9.
4. This order will not be transmitted by phone to any one, but carried by officers to the different echelons concerned.
5. Watches will be very carefully synchronized this evening according to the time given by wireless at 8 o'clock. In case this time has not been received, you will take the hour from the officer presenting these instructions.

By command of Major-General Liggett:

MALIN CRAIG
Chief of Staff

to make travel on the roads no easy task for the staff officers and messengers, who were sent flying to the Brigade Headquarters, and thence forward to the waiting battalions.

The general instructions outlining the strategic purpose of the counter-attack had made clear both the immediate object to be gained and the manner in which the advance against Von Boehn's right must proceed. To take his army in reverse; to cut his communications in the area between the Aisne and Marne, by simultaneous attacks on both his right and left toward Fère-en-Tardenois — these were set out as representing the task in hand. But all elements of the line attacking from the west could not advance at the same time. The left, being farthest distant from the general objective, would have to move first, while the right, as pivot, must hold fast till the left had come level with it.

Thus, the Twenty-Sixth Division must regulate its advance on the 167th French, its neighbor on the left. And the 51st Infantry Brigade in turn, holding the sickle-shaped line between Vaux and Bouresches, had to stay its hand until the 52d, between Bouresches and Bussiares, had straightened out abreast of the Division's right. On July 18, when the general attack was to be continued by the New Englanders and the 167th (the forward elements of the First Army Corps), the initial move forward of the Twenty-Sixth would naturally, therefore, be made by Cole's brigade of Maine and Massachusetts men.

Aware that his brigade could be first called upon, Cole had issued the necessary instructions on July 17, and completed his dispositions. It was hardly necessary for him to wait for the Division attack order. Indeed, as it was impossible that this could be prepared and issued sooner than 12.30 A.M. of July 18, Cole did not delay a moment as soon as he heard the hour at which the attack would begin — 4.35 A.M. — but at once started his battalions toward their jumping-off positions.

Because, however, the Division's field order presents completely, though summarily, the situation faced by the New Englanders that inspiring morning, it is here reproduced in full:

Headquarters 26th Division
Secret *American Expeditionary Forces* G-3
France No. 121

Field Orders No. 51 18*th July*, '18
0.30 *o'clock*

Maps: Extract from Château-Thierry, Sainte-Aulde, Condé-en-Brie, Dulce-le-Château — Scale: 1:20,000

1. The VIth Army attacks between the Ourcq and the Ru d' Alland, in conjunction with the Xth Army to its left, with the object of taking the enemy in reverse between Château-Thierry and Rheims.
2. The 1st Corps, on the right of the VIth Army, attacks between Bois Croissant and Bouresches (exclusive).
   Order of Battle from right to left: 26th Division, 167th Division (French).
3. Action of the 167th Division (French):
   Intermediate Objective: The enemy outpost.
   First Objective: Woods S.E. of Haute Vesne.
4. Action of the 26th Division:
   The 52d Infantry Brigade will attack on the line, Bouresches (exclusive) to the left of the division sector (inclusive).
   The 51st Infantry Brigade will stand fast and await orders. It will be prepared to take part in the attack.
5. Zone of action of the 26th Division:
   Left Limit: Torcy, Givry, Les Brusses Farm, Saint-Robert Farm (all to 26th Division).
   Right Limit: Vaux (R.R. Bridge), Vincelles (exclusive), Les Chesneaux (exclusive).
6. Objective of the 26th Division.
   First Objective: Torcy–Belleau–Givry–Railroad from Givry to Bouresches (exclusive).
7. All troops will be in position before daylight on J day.
   Parallel of departure: Present outpost line.
   Attack will take place on J day, at H hour, when the infantry will move forward.
   EVERY CARE WILL BE TAKEN TO PRESERVE THE NORMAL

APPEARANCE OF THE SECTOR, AND THE ENEMY WILL BE PREVENTED AT ALL COSTS FROM TAKING PRISONERS.

8. Troops.
   (*a*) In addition to the 52d Infantry Brigade (less 1st Battalion, 104th Infantry (less Company D), and Company K, 104th Infantry), there are placed at the disposal of the Commanding General 52d Infantry Brigade, 3 half companies 101st Engineers; 101st Machine-Gun Battalion (two companies); detachment, 101st Field Signal Battalion; and detachment, Sanitary Troops.

   The Commanding General, 51st Infantry Brigade will assist by machine-gun fire the advance of the 52d Infantry Brigade.

   (*b*) The 51st Artillery Brigade, and 3d Battalion, 181st Artillery (French) will assist the attack under the plan submitted by the Commanding General, 51st Artillery Brigade.

   At H hour, the barrage will be laid down along the front of the attack. No artillery firing will take place prior to H hour.

   (*c*) The 1st Battalion, 104th Infantry (less Co D), and Company K, 104th Infantry, are assigned to duty as Corps Reserve, under cover of woods north of Issonge Farm (one half kilometer south of the pyramid near La Voie du Châtel). It will be in position before daylight on J day.

   (*d*) The 12th Aero Squadron will make a reconnaissance at H-1 hour, to locate our advanced infantry positions.

   Signals: "I am the Infantry Airplane of the 26th Division" — one-star white rocket.

   Airplane will carry white streamer from right wing.

9. Liaison with neighboring units. The Commanding General, 52d Infantry Brigade, will maintain liaison with the 167th Division (French) on his left by one platoon and one machine-gun section.

   The Commanding General, 51st Infantry Brigade, will maintain liaison with the 52d Infantry Brigade by a platoon and one machine-gun section.

10. Axis of Liaison: Méry – Genevrois Farm – Paris Farm – Montgivrault–Belleau–Etrepilly–La Pénonerie Farm.

11. Message Center: Genevrois Farm.
    P. C.: Méry

12. Administrative Order will follow.

By command of Major-General Edwards:

Duncan K. Major, Jr.
Chief of Staff

Cole's order of battle from left to right was: 3d Battalion, 103d Infantry; 3d Battalion, 104th Infantry; 2d Battalion, 103d Infantry. One of his battalions (I/104, less Co. "D") and one company ("K," 104th Infantry) were held out as corps reserve, but he had a considerable addition to his machine-gun strength, and the engineers assigned to him were available for use as infantry. Behind him, in direct support, was the 101st Field Artillery, the batteries of the 1st Battalion being assigned to assist the attack of the 104th Infantry, those of the 2d Battalion having the same mission with respect to the 103d Infantry. I/101 F.A. was in the vicinity of Paris Farm, astride the Paris–Metz highway, while II/101 F.A. was astride the road running south of Champillon toward La Voie du Châtel and near the Maison Blanche.

A glance at the ground which the attack was intended to secure will assist in understanding what followed its launching. Opposite the 52d Brigade were the villages of Torcy and Belleau, some eight hundred yards apart. Behind them the ground dipped sharply into a wooded ravine, beyond which there was a sharp rise toward the broad, rounded crest of two hills, No. 190 behind Belleau, and No. 193 in the north. The pass between them, extending east, had the village of Givry at its nearer end, while Les Brusses Farm, on the slope of Hill 190, afforded the enemy an additional defensive point. At Bouresches railway station, just to the right of the zone of attack, there existed a very strong enemy machine-gun position, as we have already seen; while the heavy woods on the rising slopes behind Belleau afforded other points of resistance.

But the first phase of the attack of the 52d Brigade succeeded handsomely. The left of the line (III/103) took

Torcy in its first rush,[1] and was pressing farther. There was little or no artillery reaction from the enemy on the advance of this battalion, and for a while the French on the left were able to keep pace with it. But the center and right of the attack had trouble. The former (III/104) was seriously delayed in its assembly and start. In the tangles of Belleau Wood two of the companies lost their way and did not get to their positions until after daylight; the ammunition for the machine-gun company did not arrive on time; and consequently the battalion commander did not think himself justified in proceeding when "H" hour sounded. A severe fire dropped by the enemy artillery on the battalion in Belleau Wood, with the purpose of breaking up the assembly for attack, succeeded admirably. For a considerable period the battalion waited, scattered about the wood. Not till 7.30 o'clock did it advance, behind a second artillery protective fire. But under a new commander (Major E. E. Lewis) it attained its objectives in Belleau and Givry about 8.30 o'clock, and was once more abreast of the left of the line.[2]

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[1] Following are the messages received at Division Headquarters reporting this phase of the progress of the fight, reproduced from the "Journal of Operations":

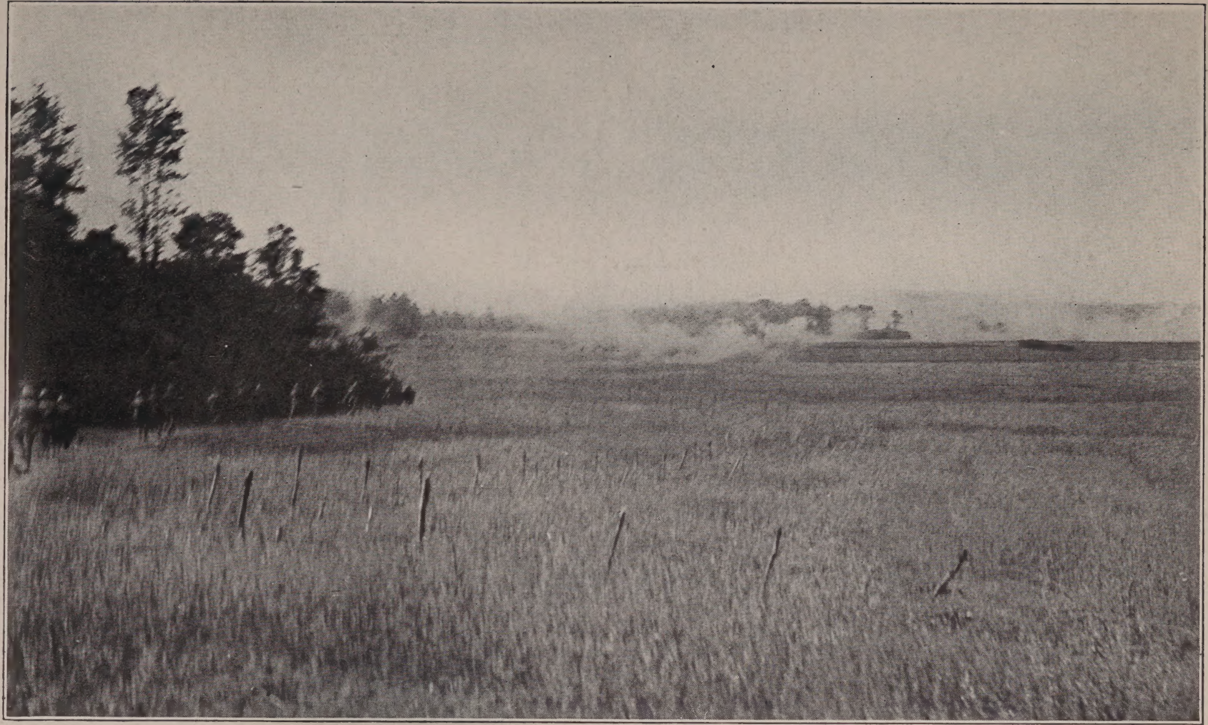
(*a*) "July 18, 1918. 5.40 o'clock. Signal from Torcy that Torcy was entered and that there was very little resistance. Troops seen in Torcy. Reported by Lieutenant Woods, "D" Company, 103d Infantry, on the outpost line."

(*b*) "July 18, 1918. 5.46 o'clock. From Smith [Headquarters 52d Infantry Brigade] to Bowen [Assistant Chief of Staff, G–3]. At 5.42 Lieut. Woods reported our infantry has passed through the town of Torcy; now on heights beyond the town; encountered no resistance; that he saw a three-star rocket from Torcy [this means objective gained]. Above telephoned to Corps by W. P. H. at 5.50 o'clock."

[2] The incident is told vividly in the messages transmitted to Division Headquarters at the time:

(*a*) "Pigeon Message: Time 6.05 o'clock. Location: at woods where III Battalion was to start from.

"Did not reach starting-off place until after attack had started. Machine-gun company did not arrive until 5.10. Their ammunition did not arrive. Infantry companies all late on account of lateness of arrival of ammunition and other supplies. When they began to arrive, it was broad daylight and fully exposed, and companies were being shelled by enemy. Battalions now scattered about woods, taking whatever cover they can find, as woods are being shelled heavily by high-explosive. Can get in touch with me through Major Lewis' P.C. Woods' P.C. 2d Battalion. (Signed) McDade, 104th Inf., 3d Bn."



PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN AT 4.30 A.M., JULY 18, 1918, SHOWING MEMBERS OF THE 103D INFANTRY JUMPING OFF

The right of the attack (II/103) also met with difficulties. Like the center battalion, it was unable to reach its parallel of departure until 7.30, three hours late, and had to have its barrage repeated. About 9.30, however, the battalion had captured the troublesome Bouresches railway station, and had established connection in the village with the left of the 51st Infantry Brigade. Beyond the station and railway embankment, however, the battalion ran into serious trouble. All day it was subjected to an enfilade machine-gun fire and could not advance; it dug in as best it could, in order to hold its ground. But at nightfall, under pressure of enemy artillery fire from Bouresches Wood, the battalion was forced to give up its gain and retire to its original starting-place in the face of an enemy counter-attack directed toward Bouresches and Belleau Wood, which was presently beaten off. It was relieved during the night by I/103. For a while it appeared that this counter-thrust of the enemy's might have real weight behind it. A considerable massing of infantry was discerned toward nightfall in the vicinity of Les Brusses Farm; the section of front next south of Bouresches was plentifully laced by the enemy artillery as if in preparation for an attack. In the early hours of the night, as the battalion fell back from the ground it had won, there was considerable uncertainty in adjoining units as to the extent

(*b*) "July 18, 1918: 6.45 o'clock. From Cole [C. G. 52d Infantry Brigade] to Bowen [Assistant Chief of Staff, G–3]. Have just received message that battalion directed to Belleau was not ready to start. Am starting them now. Have relieved one Major and put another in."

(*c*) "July 18, 1918: 8.30 o'clock. From Moscow [Headquarters 52d Infantry Brigade] to Morgan [at Division Headquarters]. Have not heard anything as yet. Am sending out string of runners to gain information; telephone out of order. At 7.00 o'clock no word from Hosford [commanding right of the attack]. McDade had not started, but would start at 7.30, and information has come in that they had started at 7.30, and have no information since. Am trying to get it now."

(*d*) "July 18, 1918: 8.45 o'clock. From Cole to Bowen. We have no direct message, but some American wounded; and a doctor at the aid station says that they tell him they come from Givry and that we are in Givry. This is not authentic yet."

and severity of the apparent repulse which this unit had sustained, but this was cleared up by the reconnaissance and following report of the commanding officer, 51st Infantry Brigade:

From: Boston One — *July* 18, 1918
To: Bowen — 23.20 *o'clock*

They tried to get in (Bouresches). Some possibly did get in. If so they are now probably all dead. What is certain according to report that reached us is that we hold Bouresches intact.

It is possible that the motive for this action of the enemy was to be found in the fact that, early in the evening, he began to withdraw some of his artillery from the front of the adjacent division on the left, in which case he may have used the Bouresches attack as a screen.

The impetuous rush of Cole's left was stayed by the inability of the French to make equally rapid progress. Meeting a heavy artillery fire in the vicinity of Licy-Clignon, the 167th was checked altogether after early successes; and later in the day it was to find difficulty in clearing Hill 193, north of Givry. The initial advance of Cole's men had carried them to the top of this hill,[1] but it was necessary to recall them, as Hill 193 belonged in the French zone of advance. The result was that the enemy promptly reoccupied the hill, from which, throughout the remainder of the day and part of the day following, he poured an effective enfilade fire of machine guns on our battalions in the ravine and along the railway between Belleau and Bouresches, where the losses sustained by these means by the right battalion had a certain bearing on its withdrawal on the evening of the first day. But until the 167th got ahead, the Twenty-Sixth could only wait. The pivot cannot move till the flank progresses. A letter of instructions from Corps Headquarters, received early in the afternoon, reveals so clearly the broad lines of the action intended without regard to the temporary or local situation, that it bears repeating:

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[1] As told in the following Field Message: "July 18, 1918, 9.45 o'clock. From Smith (52d Infantry Brigade) to Strong (at Division Headquarters). Met the Boche on his line of resistance. Sharp fight took place, after which Boche turned tail and ran like hell up the hill back of Givry, pursued by our troops. Hope for more prisoners."

July 18, 1918
13.45 *o'clock*

From: Chief of Staff, 1st Corps.
To: Chief of Staff, 26th Division. (To C.G., 26th Division.)

The 167th Division, French, are attacking in an easterly direction at 1 P.M. in liaison with other forces to the north, with first objective Montiers–Givry exclusive; second objective Epaux Bezu, La Loge Farm. Your division will advance its left in conjunction with the 167th. As soon as the 167th moves from its first objective towards its second objective, the 52d Brigade will attack in an easterly direction, with general axis Grande Picardie Farm, La Sacerie Farm, maintaining liaison with the 167th to your north. The 51st Brigade will hold itself in readiness to advance, keeping its left in touch with the 52d Brigade.

LIGGETT

As a matter of cold fact, however, the French at one o'clock of the 18th, so far from attacking in any direction, were waiting on the line they had reached early in the morning until the situation cleared on their own left. From Petret Wood the enemy had brought heavy machine-gun fire to bear on the flank of the 167th, as well as against the advance of the 164th Division which was next in line. The village of Courchamps was another center of resistance which the French had found too hard a nut to crack; and so, while Cole waited impatiently all through the afternoon and evening of the 18th for the French to come abreast of him, so that he could press on to his second objective, in accordance with the Corps orders, he was forced to hold his hand. Not till early evening did the French get ahead, maneuvering to outflank Montiers and to assault the redoubtable Hill 193, which Cole's men had already scaled, only to be required later to relinquish.

The night of the 18th was relatively quiet. Orders were received from the Corps[1] to resume the attack the next morning, "particular attention being paid to regulating the advance of each unit by the progress of the unit on its left." At the request of the 167th Division, whose commanding general paid a visit to Cole late in the afternoon for the purpose of asking the assistance of two battalions, III/104 again attacked Hill 193 about ten o'clock in the evening, patrols reaching the top without opposition: but again, because the French were unable to coöperate in securing the hill, our troops had to be recalled. The following morning the French resumed their efforts. In the direction of Courchamps, Montiers, and Hill 193 they advanced, following a heavy artillery preparation; and before nine o'clock word was received from aeroplane reconnaissance that a steady stream of enemy infantry was retreating easterly from Bonnes. A curiously interesting confirmation of this news was gathered from an intercepted German wireless message. Farther to the left the 164th Division made some progress toward Petret Wood with its casemated machine-gun nests; and at intervals throughout the day came reports of heavy explosions and fires in the enemy's back areas, where he was evidently destroying ammunition and stores. Montiers was evacuated; a demonstration by some enemy tanks and infantry on the French front was not pressed to a conclusion; there was continual evidence from all observers that a considerable retirement was in progress. But the French advance battalions, far from hustling this withdrawal, showed a tendency to be content with a very slight forward movement on the trace of the retreating foe. It required the personal pressure of the French Division Commander on the colonel of his right regiment to stir that unit up to anything like an energetic attack on Hill 193; but allowance should be made for the fact that the division next in line on the left had experienced great difficulty in breaking the resistance in the formidable Petret Wood.

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[1] Field Orders No. 11, First Army Corps, July 18, 1918.

Not yet was it sure that the Corps was being confronted by rear-guards only. Throughout the day of July 19 there was strong artillery and machine-gun activity from the enemy lines; the extent of his conjectured withdrawal could not yet be determined. For the moment the Twenty-Sixth was obliged to wait where it was, with what patience was possible, attending developments on the left. The infantry spent the time consolidating its new positions, while the artillery executed special fires on observed targets, as called for by the observers, such as the bodies of German infantry seen massed and deploying near Les Brusses Farm and Halloudray Farm, or the convoys and artillery vehicles on the roads to the rear.

July 20 saw the delay ended. Early in the morning the 167th Division resumed its attack with vigor following a strong artillery preparation; and orders came from the Corps [1] at 1 P.M. for an advance, upon which there was issued from Division Headquarters Field Order No. 55 at 2 P.M., directing an attack along the whole division front to begin at 3 o'clock. At last it was the turn of the 51st Infantry Brigade, the right of the line, to move forward; and a nice bit of maneuvering it was that the advance from its crooked line entailed. The left regiment of the brigade (102d Infantry) followed an axis of attack straight east, but the right (101st Infantry), occupying a line which faced northeast, had to pivot sharply on its own right so as to link up and move straight forward with its neighbor.

For fifteen minutes prior to the attack the artillery delivered a violent fire of preparation on the woods and ravines in advance of the infantry's front line; and as the latter moved forward, all batteries fired a barrage to a depth of three and a half kilometers. This fire was not the typical barrage, advancing in regular progression at a fixed rate, but rather a series of terrific concentrations on places which were probable machine-gun nests or other centers of resistance. From well-sited observation points, away forward, the artillery could follow every step of the infantry's advance along the entire front, could note its rate, could see where some special resistance was encountered. And so the artillery support was perfect. It was no mere mechanical protective fire, regulated by a theoretically correct time-table, which aided the infantry that afternoon. Flexible, varying in intensity with the requirements of the moment, perfectly controlled by the observers, the fire of the gunners on July 20 was a wonderful example of a moving barrier accurately placed and intelligently adapted. An incidental activity, a bit outside the work expected of artillerymen, was the capture, by the personnel of an observing station of the 101st Field Artillery, of a party of thirteen German infantrymen.

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[1] Field Order No. 15, First Army Corps, July 20, 1918, 11.20 o'clock.

And how Shelton's brigade of Connecticut and Boston men did travel on the skirts of the barrage! Released from a fortnight's waiting the infantry went forward with a rush, in spite of the enfilade from Hill 204 on the right which struck the 101st;[1] sturdily in the face of the enemy machine guns and trench mortars in Rochet Wood and Borne Agron Wood which sought to stay the 102d. Across open wheat-fields, with only a minimum of cover, the brigade advanced with fine impetuosity. On the left the 52d Infantry Brigade, sorely battered by its work of the two days previous, ploughed pluckily along. Its right[2] was cut up by artillery; its left was enfiladed; but by nightfall the whole line was on the assigned objective and good connection established between the 103d Infantry and 102d Infantry on the inner flanks of the brigades. By seven o'clock in the evening the French had come up abreast of the Twenty-Sixth, reporting that the enemy had withdrawn so rapidly on their front that they had lost touch. Montiers and Petret Wood had fallen; Hill 193, that bastion of defense, was evacuated. Here, as elsewhere, the

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[1] One company was withdrawn temporarily from the position it had gained because of *minenwerfer* fire, but reoccupied the ground later.

[2] Hanson's battalion, 1/103d Infantry.

Germans left rear-guard detachments, as small as single squads, to cover the retreat; and to the credit of these little groups be it said that all of them defended their positions to the last.

It had been a good day. The first line of the enemy defenses had been broken down; he was in full retreat; the Division was on its objective at the edge of the Etrepilly Plateau, ready for the next stage of the movement to cut the enemy lines of retreat. And how the work of the Twenty-Sixth, during the first three days of the offensive, impressed the Army Commander, General Dégoutte, that general's own comments will testify:

> If one wants to judge the offensive spirit which animates the Americans and their tactical methods, one has only to follow in detail the operations of a division since the beginning of our counter-attack between Château-Thierry and Soissons.
>
> It was on the 18th, at 4 A.M., that the order to take the first line of German positions was received. The American division, whose movements we will relate, was at that time northwest of Château-Thierry, in the Bois de Belleau, at the pivot of the troops, and had taken the place of a division which took part in the operations of Belleau and Bouresches, and it wanted to distinguish itself as well as those *élite* troops. But the divisions placed at the pivot have to advance slowly, according to the progress made by the wings.
>
> On the very first day it was necessary to moderate the ardor of the Americans, who would willingly have gone farther than the first objectives. Indeed, at the signal of the attack the American troops went with perfect discipline, in rear of the artillery barrage, to the Torcy–Belleau–Givry line and the railroad line up to the Bouresches station. They reached this line in one sweep almost without meeting any resistance, and, excited by their success, they wanted to go farther.
>
> However, it was necessary, before continuing the general advance, to take Montiers and Petret Wood, still strongly occupied by the Germans. There was hard fighting on the part of the French troops on the left to annihilate the resistance of the enemy.
>
> In order to relieve them, the Americans, on the evening of the 20th, made an enveloping maneuver which was crowned with

success. With splendid valiance they went in one sweep as far as Etrepilly Height, the Gonetrie Farm, and Halmardière. American audacity! Notwithstanding the machine-gun barrage and the enemy's islands of resistance, they advanced for two kilometers, capturing three guns, a big *minenwerfer*, and numerous machine guns. Moreover, 200 prisoners were taken by the Americans.

I could not have done better, in a similar occasion, with my best troops.

CHAPTER XIII

THE AISNE–MARNE OFFENSIVE — EPIEDS AND TRUGNY

NOT from a survey of the local situation, nor even from a study of the fragmentary dispatches from other parts of the front which buzzed and clicked into Headquarters that night, could the Division get more than a glimmer of the importance of the action in which it had just played so excellent a part. The New Englanders had gone steadily forward, winning all objectives by hard fighting, with losses no greater than the ransom which glory always pays. The American Commander-in-Chief had visited Headquarters soon after the battle was joined on July 18, had cross-questioned the Division Commander, and pronounced himself satisfied. One read bulletins of Allied victories to the north, near Soissons. But not yet could one understand the hour's significance. Nobody dreamed that the encounters of July 18–20 had marked a turning-point of the war — that with the forward rush on that brilliant morning, the initiative and the offensive had alike irrevocably passed to Foch, the master who had dared so splendidly.

But no less a triumph than that had definitely been won. To the left of the Sixth Army under Dégoutte, the Tenth Army under Mangin had secured resounding successes. His left, debouching from the wooded country about Ambleny, had never stopped till it was on the Montagne de Paris, a couple of miles from Soissons, the vital point in the salient's supply and communication system; his center reached Berzy-le-Sec, cutting the salient's principal highway; his right connected with Dégoutte's force in the vicinity of Oulchy-la-Ville.[1] The left of the Sixth Army in two days advanced from Faverolles to Oulchy, not less than 13 kilometers; and, more important than the ground gained, there had been a heavy capture of prisoners and guns, while the enemy, caught unawares, was sent reeling back in disorder. The western side of the salient had been smashed in from end to end.

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[1] American troops with Mangin, including the First and Second Divisions, were engaged on both July 18 and 19.

Apparently, even Von Boehn did not grasp the importance and extent of the Allied victories on his left flank. Planted on the Marne's southern bank, where as many as eight divisions were committed, he hung on for thirty-six hours in spite of the growing menace to his principal lines of retreat and supply. Not till the night of July 20 did he begin his retirement from the river, under heavy pressure from the Fifth Reserve Army, under De Mitry, and the Ninth Army of Berthelot. Not till early in the morning of the 21st was Château-Thierry evacuated; and then was the moment for Dégoutte, directly on the flank of the retiring Germans, crowding north on the few available roads, to deal a blow which should spell disaster.

To effect this speed was all-important. At all costs one must quickly break through whatever screen of opposition Von Boehn might have created to guard his flank, and solidly secure the routes by which the withdrawal of the troops and guns in the neck of the salient must be made. Of these the chief were the Château-Thierry–Soissons highway, and then, some ten kilometers farther east, the road extending north from Jaulgonne, on the Marne, to Fère-en-Tardenois. And so hardly had the Twenty-Sixth and its French companion division caught their breath after the fighting of the late hours of July 20, before orders came from the Corps directing a resumption of the advance the following morning.[1] Forwarded to the brigade commanders by endorsement, the Corps order was supplemented by Field Order No. 56, directing, in accordance with the Corps plan, an advance without reference to the progress of neighboring divisions. At all costs the troops must get forward promptly. On the theory that the enemy was in full retreat and that he must be closely followed up, the movement of the Division forward was arranged in the form of a march in which the 51st Infantry Brigade should lead accompanied by the 102d Field Artillery, the other troops remaining in position till further orders, except one battalion of the 103d Infantry and a machine-gun company of the 52d Infantry Brigade, which were to move out as left flank guard of the 51st Brigade's column. In this the 102d Infantry was to act as advance guard accompanied by the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion; it was to direct itself toward the hamlet of Trugny *via* Sacerie Wood and Sacerie Farm. One thousand yards in the rear the 101st Infantry and 102d Field Artillery marched as the main body. Later orders from the Corps directed the advance to be begun at 4 A.M. on July 21.

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[1] Field Orders No. 17, First Army Corps, July 20, 20.00 o'clock; received at Division Headquarters at 21.00 o'clock.

Through the morning of the 21st the forward movement was pursued steadily, without opposition. The advance party (I/102d Infantry) took some prisoners at the station near where the Soissons–Château-Thierry railway passes under a tunnel at Sacerie Farm; by noon the advance guard was on the great Soissons–Château-Thierry highway. There was every evidence of a somewhat precipitate withdrawal on the part of the enemy, great quantities of ammunition being left behind, with other supplies. Most of his artillery and machine guns, however, he had been able to remove. For a couple of hours the troops rested and were reorganized. Then, at four in the afternoon, on receipt of orders from Shelton, the 102d Infantry resumed its march toward Trugny, along the road by Sacerie Farm and Breteuil Farm, and through the copses of Breteuil Wood. Cautiously, with an advance party deployed as skirmishers, did the 102d now proceed, for reconnaissance by the regimental commander along the eastern edge of

Breteuil Wood overlooking Trugny and the village of Epieds had promptly drawn fire, and it became evident that what had started as a pursuit was now to be changed to an attack on a resolute rear-guard holding an exceedingly well-chosen position.

The head of the advance had struck an obstacle which, apparently, had not been reckoned with. Not even the Brigade Commander believed that the line of Epieds–Trugny and Trugny Wood was going to be held; and, farther to the rear, orders and more orders demanded that the advance be continued without delay or cessation, that it be pressed with vigor, that the troops reach the Jaulgonne–Fère-en-Tardenois road by daylight of July 22.[1] This objective was a matter of only nine kilometers (5 5/8 miles) away on the far side of almost continuous woodland, with two strongly defended villages in the path, and accessible only by narrow country roads. The order reached the advanced battalions after nightfall, when there was no possible chance for reconnaissance or for the preparation of firing data by the artillery. But such physical considerations as these were of no importance; nor did it appear worth attention that the Division's left flank was in the air, owing to the fact that the French, less advanced than the Twenty-Sixth, had been blocked by the German machine guns in La Goutterie Farm. Major considerations — to cut the enemy's line of retreat — must outweigh all others. Division Headquarters meanwhile had moved up to Lucy-le-Bocage and, later in the day, to Grand Ru Farm, where it remained throughout the remainder of the Division's operation.

What actually happened on the night of July 21 and early in the morning of July 22 is interesting to compare with what was supposed to happen. The estimate of the situation by higher Headquarters was partly based on the reports of prisoners, who stated that only small rear-guard forces were opposing the Division and that a general retreat was under way. To push vigorously ahead; to break down the temporary rear-guard opposition; to come to grips at once with the disorganized elements of the main body — these steps, prescribed by both common sense and the Field Service Regulations, were promptly transcribed in field orders and sent forward. And it was assumed, of course, that the orders would be promptly carried out, the first step being for the advance troops to get contact with the rear-guard, attack, and destroy it. A field message from the Brigade Commander condensed the orders to explicit directions.

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[1] Telephone message of Corps Commander, 16.36 o'clock, and written Corps memorandum received at 18.30 o'clock, followed by Field Order No. 58, July 21, 17.25 o'clock.

We have seen the 102d Infantry deploying past Sacerie Farm through Breteuil Wood, toward the hamlet of Trugny, late in the afternoon of July 21. We have seen how its scouts and skirmishers drew fire from the wide semicircle of woods which backed this village and Epieds, set amid the wide fields of golden wheat in a shallow bowl a half-mile wide, where not a rat could get cover from machine guns. Reconnaissance developed clearly that the villages were strongly held; darkness was coming on; the advance-guard commander elected to wait till daylight before beginning his attack. Behind him was the 101st Infantry, not far from Blanchard Farm and Lauconnois Farm, waiting for the main body's complement of artillery to come up. On his right patrols had made a tenuous connection with the French; on the left a battalion of the 103d Infantry, the flank guard of the column, had come up nearly abreast and was lying opposite Epieds, with many yards of perfectly open country to traverse before it could get near the town. The advance-guard command post, was in Breteuil Wood, some twelve hundred yards short of Trugny village.

All the night of July 21 this advance guard waited in position with march outposts to its front and flanks. Back at Division Headquarters it was decided that the 101st Infantry should attack at daybreak of July 22 on the right, while the 102d Infantry took Trugny village. The 52d Infantry Brigade, meanwhile, was to break through the enemy lines at Epieds. But orders from the Corps,[1] received just after midnight, directed that, owing to the contraction of the Corps front, the Twenty-Sixth should take it over, which was translated to mean that the 52d Infantry Brigade, on the left, should take over the front of the 167th Division (French) while the 51st Brigade covered the front of the Twenty-Sixth. Immediately this order was got forward, but owing to the darkness and the congestion of the roads, the order did not reach Shelton till 2 A.M.; it did not reach Cole till 5.30 A.M. And to increase the difficulty, the Corps Commander suspended the order as soon as he was advised that the advance elements of both brigades were already engaged in the morning's attack; howbeit some elements had already gone to the new positions, and the French (167th) had stood fast, not knowing of the suspension of the order.

But all this had little bearing on what was actually in progress that July morning. At 11.20 P.M. on July 21, Shelton, in command of the 51st Infantry Brigade, sent the following message to the commander of the 102d Infantry which was still acting as advance guard.

La Sacerie Farm, July 21/18

Hour 23.20. No. 5
To C.O. 102 Inf.

Colonel Herbert with three batteries 102 Field Artillery will support your attack. He will consult with you in respect to location of guns and targets. Logan has been ordered to move his regiment immediately and dispose it on your right. One battalion of Logan's regiment will be detached as brigade reserve. The 103d Infantry, 52d Brigade, is moving into place to your left. Establish liaison with Logan as soon as he arrives and report results to me. Develop enemy's position and his strength by strong patrols. At any sign of withdrawal or weakness, attack at once. If enemy's strength, in your judgment, forbids this now, I will fix upon H hour for a combined attack as soon as 101st Infantry has been reported in place. Send 3 runners to report to me at this P.C., who can find your P.C. Keep me fully informed of developments. The most vigorous action on the part of this brigade is now demanded.

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[1] Field Order No. 19, Headquarters 1st Army Corps, July 21, 22.40 o'clock.

Shelton, C.G.

So ran the brigadier's orders. In the middle of the night Colonel Herbert found the advance-guard commander in Breteuil Wood and endeavored to arrange for proper artillery support of the morning's advance — a difficult task, since objectives and the exact position of the enemy were not yet defined. The troops in the wood suffered some from an enfilading artillery fire from the left rear, from German batteries which the French had not yet cleared from their path; but the advance was arranged, and at dawn as the 52d Brigade moved on Epieds, the 102d Infantry advanced on Trugny, believing that the 101st Infantry was already disposed on its right, to cover that flank in accordance with Shelton's orders. The action developed; and the following messages from the battalion commanders (Rau in advance, Thompson in support, Bissell in reserve), like Shelton's order, are eloquent, indeed, when compared with the carefully drafted plans and the expectations of high authority. Vividly they illustrate the gap, which is so difficult to bridge, between assaulting units and the High Command. Advancing from Breteuil Wood and the farm of that name at daybreak, Rau sent the following message at 6.45 o'clock by runner:

Am held up on my right flank by hostile machine-gun fire in woods to northeast of Trugny. Need one-pounders or machine guns to knock them out. My right flank is apparently exposed. Hostile infantry has evidently pulled out leaving machine guns in possession of woods.

Hardly had he finished this report of the situation before it altered for the worse. A second message brought by the same runner says:

> Hostile heavy artillery is bombarding us heavily. Hostile machine-gun fire on both flanks; nearest are firing from our right rear. Send something over there, or we will have to stop or pull out altogether.

Suffered to approach and enter Trugny without much opposition, the advance battalion, 102d Infantry, unsupported on its flanks, received a fatal machine-gun fire, and was hammered at the same time by German heavy artillery. How severely it suffered may be gathered from a third message, sent a few minutes later:

> For Christ's sake, knock out the machine guns on our right. Heavy casualties. What troops should be on my right and left, and where are they?

Behind Rau's battalion came the supports under Thompson. Involved in the attack from the early stages, this battalion was also in difficulties from the outset, as Thompson's message to the Regimental Commander shows, dated at 7.30 o'clock:

> Where is that reserve battalion? We need it bad. Send machine guns quick. We can't clean up with what we have.

And a fourth message, received about the same time (8.30) at Regimental Headquarters, from Bissell, commanding the reserve battalion, is illuminating when read in conjunction with the reports of the other battalion commanders. It is dated 7.35 o'clock.

> Have sent Lieutenant Walker of 3d Battalion to flank them. Am afraid to use artillery; machine guns still active, however. Must have our right protected. Apparently no friendly troops on right. Coördinates of machine guns 63.9–87.6; 63.1–87.4. Friendly troops on left apparently falling back. Machine guns very active again; large number of casualties from them.

Checked on his front, though his attack had been assisted by a company of the 101st Machine-Gun Battalion throughout; with his right unsupported, the advance-guard commander reported the situation to the brigadier with a request for assistance. The latter had previously repeated his emphatic order to press the attack, believing that the enemy screen was a thin one; but on receipt of full information regarding the check to the leading elements, he lost no time in giving the advance-guard commander the help on his right which the latter had all along confidently expected and now was urgently demanding. To Logan he sent the following order at 10.35 o'clock:

Headquarters 51*st Infantry Brigade, July* 22, 1918
10.35 o'clock. Message No. 6
To Commanding Officer, 101st Infantry

Colonel Parker reports that his advance line held up by machine-gun fire coming from about the right front of his line, or from your left front. Advance as rapidly as possible and take these in the flank. I have already informed you of the fact that prisoners report machine-gun ammunition almost exhausted. Remaining Germans in our front are reported also without food since retreat started. Push thing through.

SHELTON, C.G.

At the same time (10.55 o'clock), he sent to Parker the following message of reassurance and encouragement:

Cannot use artillery preparation just now on line in your front. Position of leading elements too uncertain. Have directed 101st Infantry to assist you in flanking them, and artillery will commence on areas immediately in rear at once. Under existing circumstances I believe this will enable you to make the final shove that will drive them out. It is highly important that they be driven out. Advance will probably be easy after that. I am also sending one platoon of artillery into Logan's sector in an attempt to bring direct fire upon machine-gun nests now in your front.

SHELTON, C.G.

From the advance battalion, 102d Infantry, strong patrols had crept forward through the open wheat-fields and along a creek bottom; they had secured a foothold at Epieds before 6.30 o'clock, as a message from the patrol leader indicated.[1] But in general, though small groups clung for a while to their initial gains, the morning attack presently broke down in the face of the enemy's heavy and skillful machine-gun fire from the nests in Epieds, from others hidden in the wheat, and in Trugny Wood on the right. Nor did the advance elements of the 52d Brigade on the left fare any better, the leading battalions losing heavily. On the right the Thirty-Ninth French Division reported that it was held solidly (at 10.30 A.M.) on a line running through Barbillon Forest, but expected to attack again at 12.45; on the left the 167th French Division could not progress past the stubborn resistance of the German garrison in La Goutterie Farm, which, like every point of their general line, fairly bristled with machine guns.

But again the Twenty-Sixth tried it, at four o'clock in the afternoon of the 22d. The 101st Infantry, getting into action on the right, attempted to penetrate Trugny Wood; the 102d Infantry, its strength sadly reduced, pushed once more against the village, after an artillery preparation. Detachments from the 101st Engineers aided in the attempt of the 51st Brigade; while the 52d Brigade, on the left, flung itself against Epieds. But nothing was accomplished. Once more the enemy resistance proved too strong. During the night the 101st Infantry was forced to withdraw from the line it had reached; the losses elsewhere were severe.[1] A holding line was established at nightfall, composed of miscellaneous elements — engineers and pioneer platoons being mingled with the meager infantry forces; and a darkness came down which seemed dark, indeed, as the enemy artillery fire played on the woods where the two brigades and the forward batteries were lying.[2]

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[1] The message is here reproduced for its human as well as its military-historical interest. The whole party was captured by the enemy shortly after the message was forwarded:

Detachments Co. D., Co. A., 6.30 A.M.
In south edge of Epieds

1. Am here with 20 "A" men, Lts. Oates and Milspaugh, and about 25 "D" men with Lts. Bushy and Jewel.
2. Co. "B" has converged away to my right. The Boches are in north edge of town, but retiring little by little.
3. Cannot advance, as Boches are strong with machine guns ahead. Will wait here till 2d line reaches me. We need ammunition and medical aid.

DANIEL W. STRICKLAND
Capt. Co. "D"

During the night a change of plan was decided on. It is true that Army and Corps orders of the moment enjoined a continuation of the push straight forward; the Division Commander was reminded of this both by Shelton and by the Chief of Staff. But with a full understanding of the situation, knowing the futility of a head-on attack under the circumstances, which would have attained, as a certainty, only a large loss of life, General Edwards determined to risk a variation from existing orders, believing that other methods would attain the desired result more surely and at smaller cost. Briefly, therefore, instead of sending the 51st Brigade straight against the Epieds–Trugny Wood positions, he decided to essay flanking methods. Borrowing a little of the field assigned to the French

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[1] A message from the commanding officer of the advance battalion, 102d Infantry, dated at 5 P.M. says:

"On reconnaissance of ground, I find that Trugny has Boches there. The town of Epieds is loaded with guns. The patch of woods that was shelled by our artillery still has all of ten heavy machine guns. It is impossible to advance with the troops here. Rau has about 100 men left out of his battalion; I have less than 200."

[2] Special Situation Report from C G. 52d Infantry Brigade (Cole) states: "The troops have been under a heavy shell-fire and machine-gun fire during most of the night. . . . More than 1000 shells were fired in the vicinity of my P.C. last night. . . . The brigade is greatly reduced in strength, probably not more than 2400 effectives. The men have now been marching and fighting for four days, part of the time at night, and no time have they been able to get any sleep."

Message from Division Surgeon to Division Headquarters, dated 10.30 o'clock, July 23, states: "Casualties passing through advanced dressing-station for 24 hours — 6 o'clock 22d July, 1918, to 6 o'clock 23d July, 1918:

Wounded	565
Gassed	368
Sick and exhausted	293
Total	1226

on the right, he determined to thrust the 101st Infantry into Trugny Wood like a wedge, farther to the south, turning the left flank of the enemy's line. In person, verbally, he gave the necessary instructions. The 101st Infantry was ordered to push forward resolutely and persistently in the new direction. Fatigue of the men, difficulty of maneuver, heavy resistance were not to count. And the response on the regiment's part to the general's injunctions was taken as a good indication of the morrow's success.

Confirmed in this decision by orders from the Corps [1] which demanded the penetration of the enemy's line by a regiment in each division, the Division Commander issued the necessary orders for such an attack, which was to be followed by an exploitation by the other regiments in line,[2] and, following verbal by formal written orders, designated the 101st Infantry as the unit to carry out the operation.

At 6 A.M., after a thorough artillery preparation, the 101st Infantry moved forward. A detachment of two companies, 101st Engineers, operating as infantry, maneuvered on the left and center toward Epieds. For several hours the infantry essayed to make progress against the same solid resistance which had marked the conflicts of the 22d, but in the end the 101st was forced back to its original position, being obliged to leave some of its wounded on the field.

Earlier in the day the Corps, realizing that the Division must be strengthened in numbers if it was to carry the line forward, had assigned the 111th Infantry (of the 56th Brigade, Twenty-Eighth Division) as Division Reserve for July 23 only. It also directed that the Twenty-Sixth take over the entire Corps front,[3] pursuant to which the Division Commander caused orders to be issued by which the 51st Infantry Brigade should take over the Division's front, while the 52d Brigade, strengthened by two battalions of the 111th Infantry, should assemble preparatory to relieving the 167th French Division.[1] On the heels of these arrangements, however, came orders from the Corps at about 18.30 o'clock,[2] directing an attack by both the Twenty-Sixth and the 167th, so previous orders had to be revoked. But about 6.30 o'clock in the evening a staff officer from the Corps brought word[3] that the whole of the 56th Brigade was placed at the disposal of the Division Commander, who was directed to place it at once in the line, in order to comply with current Army orders and drive the line forward. The new troops were to relieve the 52d Brigade, which was to be promptly reorganized with a view to employing its units in carrying the advance forward.

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[1] Field Orders No. 20, Headquarters First Army Corps.

[2] Field Orders No. 59, July 22, 22.30 o'clock.

[3] By Field Orders No. 21, First Army Corps, 12.30 o'clock, July 23, 1918.

All efforts were made to bring the new troops (111th, 112th Infantry) into position, the movement commencing late in the day of the 23d. It should be remembered that "up front" the day's efforts had been disappointing. On the right the 101st Infantry had not been able to make good its advance into Trugny Wood, while the remainder of the forward infantry had effected no appreciable gains, gallant efforts by the 52d Brigade to get forward having resulted only in the attack being broken up and hurled back in some disorder. The German rear-guard resistance held solidly. But the Division Commander drove hard. With fresh troops at his disposal, he employed all means available to reorganize his advance immediately and launch a new blow against the German resistance. The 56th Brigade arrived without rations and having concluded a long march; the Brigade Commander was unfamiliar with the ground and the situation; one of his regiments was in Corps reserve. But he was directed to overcome all these obstacles, and was afforded all possible assistance at Division Headquarters, staff officers were assigned as guides, rations were furnished the new arrivals; the one consideration was to get the battalions in position for an advance at 4.05 o'clock the following morning, one battalion, 112th Infantry, being designated to pass through the 101st Infantry in the right sub-sector, the remainder of the brigade being assigned to the relief of the 52d Brigade on the left. All night the new troops were pushed forward — a night of the greatest strain imaginable, coming as it did on top of the inconclusive fighting of the day and of the day previous.

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[1] Field Orders No. 60, July 23, 16.00 o'clock.

[2] Field Orders No. 22, First Army Corps, July 23, 1918, 19.00 o'clock.

[3] Letter No. 130, G-3, Headquarters, First Army Corps.

Dawn brought varied news. With the coming of daylight the Commanding General, 56th Brigade, reported that he had been unable to get his battalions into position at "H" hour and so must delay his attack. But from the French on the left, at almost the same moment, came news of a different color. Advancing after an artillery preparation elements of the 167th Division had found that the enemy had withdrawn from their front, and that the French cavalry patrols had gone forward on reconnaissance and to reëstablish contact. Immediately a change in the Division's plans were made. The morning's attack was declared off; messages to Shelton and Weigel[1] urged their brigades forward at once — they were to crowd ahead and get contact by every means possible. Throughout the day the forward movement was rushed, for early it became evident that the enemy had withdrawn from Barbillon Forest, Trugny Wood, and from Epieds. To the 101st Machine-Gun Battalion (motorized) the Division Commander gave a mission such as would usually fall to divisional cavalry. With right of way over all other troops, the machine-gunners were to press through to the Jaulgonne road with directions to intercept or hamper the enemy's retreat. The sorely battered 52d Infantry Brigade, its fine work completed for the present, was relieved and had withdrawn to the vicinity of Etrepilly, west of the Château-Thierry–Soissons highway by late afternoon; but on the part of all the rest of the Division there was a surge forward, each combat element eager to close with the enemy, every man smarting under the check which the infantry had received in front of Epieds and in bloody Trugny Wood. By afternoon, with the 102d Infantry again in the lead, the columns of the 51st Infantry Brigade were on the edge of La Fère Forest, where its left rested five hundred yards to the east of La Logette Pond. Toward evening battalions of the 56th Brigade were got into the advance-guard position; the artillery assigned to the brigade was in close support; and the 101st Machine-Gun Battalion (checked in its rapid advance) bivouacked close to Shelton's Headquarters in Grange Marie Farm.

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[1] C.G., 56th Infantry Brigade.

While it was known that a brigade of the Forty-Second Division was intended to arrive in the area that day (24th July) by motor-truck, and effect the relief of the 51st and 56th Brigades, while arrangements were in hand to have the newcomers take up the pursuit at dawn on July 25,[1] nevertheless the advance must be kept up without relaxation. Steadily forward, therefore, had Shelton pushed his battalions until darkness was at hand, when the impossibility of reconnaissance and the necessity of taking up positions in readiness for deployment into approach formations made a further advance in column for the moment impracticable. At nightfall, therefore, the infantry halted in La Fère Forest, awaiting detailed orders. From Division Headquarters, moreover, had been dispatched the following message, which gave Shelton the most specific instructions possible, and confirmed him not only in his action of halting in place in La Fère Wood, but also in the belief that the relief of his exhausted troops was at hand:

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[1] Field Orders No. 63, 24 July, 1918, 16.45 o'clock.

Hq. 26th Div., 24 July, 1918, 14.00 *o'clock*

Message No. 3.

To: Commanding General, 51st Infantry Brigade.

1. The infantry of the 26th Division will be relieved during the night 24/25 July by a brigade of the 42d Division. This relief will be accomplished so as to enable the brigade of the 42d Division to take up the pursuit of the enemy at dawn, 25 July, 1918.

2. The 51st Brigade will remain in place under cover until further orders.

3. You will immediately report in the most expeditious way the location of your units. Telephone connection with the Divisional P.C. should be obtained at the earliest practicable hour.

By command of Major-General Edwards:

Duncan K. Major, Jr.
Chief of Staff

With what feelings, therefore, must Shelton have received the subsequent orders [1] which, owing to the couriers' difficulty on the congested roads, did not reach him till midnight. The Division Chief of Staff, who had arrived at Grange Marie Farm about the same time as the orders, insisted that the following directions should be taken literally, as exactly expressing the Corps' desire:

> The 1st Corps is to be pushed forward to-night without cessation. A supreme effort is tobe made to attack and take Sergy not later than 2 o'clock on the morning of July 25, and to push on without delay to the plateau beyond.
>
> The Sergy Plateau must be reached just prior to the break of day. Accomplishment of this will permit the Cavalry Corps to pass through and effectively break up a hard-pressed and retreating enemy. A complete victory is at hand.
>
> The 26th Division (less 52d Brigade) and the 56th Brigade will push forward on Sergy and the plateau to the east of Sergy.

To this project Shelton opposed objections with the blunt frankness of the commander on the ground who knows conditions. It was physically impossible even to get his battalions in formation to start the advance before dawn; the artillery plans had not been made; he had no instructions as to supply or evacuation; there was no chance for reconnaissance; his troops were utterly exhausted. At the very hour that this order was delivered, the German artillery was drenching La Fère Forest with gas and lacing the wood roads with high-explosive shell. And when the Chief of Staff insisted, Shelton, in the presence of his regimental commanders, demanded an autographed confirmation.

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[1] Field Orders No. 64, 24 July, 1918, 20.30 o'clock.

What the Chief of Staff composed in answer to this request has a quaintly human interest. His message ran:

Hq. 26th Division
0.35 *o'clock, 25 July,* 1918

From: C. of S.
To: C. G. 51st Infantry Brigade.
Subject: Farther Advance.

1. You will make every preparation to attack at H hour 25 July, 1918. H hour may be as early as 4.00 o'clock.

2. Notice to attack will be announced from Division Headquarters.

D. K. Major, Jr.
Chief of Staff

The fact that this order was not signed "by Command" made it a semblance of an order, and nothing more. It evidenced that ready ingenuity, property of all good soldiers, in reconciling on paper, at least, any disparity between real conditions at the front and assumed conditions at the rear. "H" hour never was announced; though officers from every unit in the brigade and from the artillery waited at Grange Marie Farm till three hours after the moment they were directed to be in Sergy.

The day saw the 167th French Division make its way into Beuvardes, while their smart, well-horsed cavalry patrols got forward into La Fère Forest; away on the right the Thirty-Ninth French Division, emerging from Barbillon Forest, were forced to spend time and strength in forcing a way through the village of Le Charmel. The infantry of the Forty-Second Division began to arrive; and during the late afternoon and evening the 51st Infantry Brigade, and also the 56th, gave place to the newcomers on the line through La Fère Forest, Fary Farm, and thence to the Jaulgonne road.

The fight was over, so far as the riflemen and machine-gunners were concerned. The new battalions got to their places, and command passed to the Commanding General, Forty-Second Division, at 19 o'clock, July 25.

The fight was over, with eighteen kilometers of ground gained in the face of stubborn resistance. The American Commander-in-Chief had visited the Division and praised its work; the French Army Commander, after twitting the Division Commander with having ventured to deviate from Army orders, the while broadly smiling his approval of a move which accomplished a purpose and saved lives, singled out the Twenty-Sixth as exemplifying the best characteristics of the American troops; the local French municipal authorities, from whose doors the Division had helped avert the German flood, penned testimonials eloquent of their gratitude. Perhaps, indeed, that which made the soldiers realize most vividly that they had helped to stem, not only a military, but a national peril, was the sight of the peasants creeping back to their wrecked villages, eager and able to start life anew, thanks to *les Américains*, even before the troops had completed their march along the littered roadways toward the rear.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AISNE-MARNE OFFENSIVE — AFTERWARDS

THE artillery, ammunition train, engineers, and signal troops stayed on. In the wake of the infantry of two other divisions the gunners moved forward, forever firing, forever limbering up with their scarecrow teams, but with drivers and cannoneers who were always game, with staff and battery officers who toiled most tirelessly. Official military reports are interesting mainly to experts; but there is a story of devotion, discipline, and skill between the lines of General Aultman's every paragraph which has an appeal for every reader. The following extracts from Aultman's report relate vividly the work of the artillery after the relief of the Division's infantry and machine-gun units:

> On the night of July 25–26, 1918, the Infantry of the 26th Division and the 56th Brigade were relieved by the 84th Brigade of the 42d Division (Brig.-Gen. R. A. Brown, N.A.). At the same time the 83d Brigade, 42d Division (Brig.-Gen. M. J. Lenihan, N.A.), relieved the 167th Division (French), thus placing the 42d Division on the entire 1st Corps front.
>
> As a part of this plan, the Divisional Artillery of the 42d Division was to reënforce the 51st F.A. Brigade on the night of July 25–26. The extension of the divisional front of the 42d Division, however, resulted in diverting the 42d Divisional Artillery to the support of the 83d Brigade, leaving the 51st F.A. Brigade in support of the 84th Infantry Brigade alone.
>
> The command passed from the 26th Division to the 42d Division upon the passage of the first units of the latter through the front line of the 26th Division, this actually taking place on the morning of July 26. . . . In the foregoing operations, while the command post of the brigade was frequently at a considerable distance from Division Headquarters, liaison was maintained therewith through conferences at Division Headquarters, and through visits of the Division Commander and the Chief of Staff to the forward Brigade P.C.

On the afternoon of July 26, plans were made to support the attack on our right of the 39th French Division and the 3d American Division. The artillery preparation was made, and the infantry advance found that the enemy had withdrawn across the Ourcq. . . . After reconnaissance on the morning of July 27, batteries were moved on the night of July 27–28 to positions in the vicinity of Esperance Farm, Four-a-Verre, La Croix Blanche Farm, and Croix Rouge Farm, covering with their fire the plateau north and east of Sergy. . . . During the period from the morning of July 28 to the morning of August 1, with the exception of a slight forward move by two heavy artillery battalions, the brigade remained in position, and engaged in repeated artillery demonstrations in connection with infantry attacks on the heights to the north and east of Sergy. Its special mission during this time was neutralization of machine guns . . . which enfiladed any infantry attack to the north and east. The neutralization of these points was especially necessary in view of the slowness of the advance of the troops on our right by whom they could be taken in reverse, and in whose sector they lay. Heavy concentrations were also placed upon the vicinity of the Château de Nesle, Nesle, and the Ferme de Camp, which were reported to contain enemy organizations.

At 9 o'clock, July 30, the 84th Brigade attacked the heights north of Sergy. Artillery preparation commenced at 8 o'clock, and was to continue throughout the operations. . . . Bois de Pelger and Bois de la Planchette were to be held under heavy fire prior to, during, and after the operation, in order to protect the right flank of the infantry attack. This programme was not adhered to, and the fire on these points was lifted in accordance with the verbal request of the infantry commander. The attack failed.

On July 31 another attack was planned in conjunction with the troops on our right. The artillery plan was similar to that of the previous day. The preparation was to start at 16.30. At 16.20 the infantry commander gave orders to stop all artillery fire. Five minutes later, the infantry brigade commander requested fire to be placed on all points except the Bois de Pelger and Bois de la Planchette. With this exception the programme was fired. At 18.10 a repetition of part of the programme was requested and given, and at 18.18 a request was made to concentrate on Bois de Pelger and Bois de la Planchette all possible fire and to continue the same until further order. It is understood that the attack did not progress, and fire was later ordered to cease.

On August 1 the brigade prepared an attack of the 84th Brigade, which was to advance on the heights north of Sergy in conjunction with the 32d Division on its right. The artillery preparation was fired throughout, and the advance was successful.

As a result the enemy withdrew on the night of August 1–2, and on the night of August 2–3 all batteries were moved forward to positions in the valley of the Ourcq, the light artillery north of the stream, and the heavy artillery south of it. The brigade P.C. was moved to Sergy early on the morning of August 3, when it developed that the enemy's withdrawal was more extensive than at first indicated. The brigade P.C. was at once moved to Nesle, and the entire brigade started forward in support of the infantry.

During this movement, the 8th Brigade of the 4th Division (Brig.-Gen. E. E. Booth, N.A.) passed through and relieved the 84th Brigade of the 42d Division.

At 14.15 o'clock August 3, telephonic orders were received (later confirmed by F.O. No. 26, 4th Division) for this brigade to occupy a position for the defense of the line marked by Hills 204.8 and 210. Positions were immediately reconnoitered and batteries placed in position by nightfall, the light artillery east and west of Chery–Chartreuve, and the heavy artillery in the vicinity of Chartreuve Farm. Brigade P.C. was established at Dole. This order placed the brigade in a defensive position, and relieved it from any further mobile mission with the 4th Division.

It later transpired that it was not intended to move the brigade into these positions, but to make the reconnaissance and prepare for occupation. The order was, however, explicit, and was obeyed without delay or question. The positions taken commanded towns and heights north of the Vesle.

At 14 o'clock on August 4, forward observers of the brigade noticed heavy movements of enemy troops in these areas. This was reported to the heavy artillery of the 67th Brigade; but, as this regiment was not prepared to fire thereon, the 51st Brigade took the targets under fire. The final fire of the 51st F.A. Brigade was by the 3d Battalion of the 103d Field Artillery upon German organizations north of the Vesle.

At 17 o'clock, August 4, verbal orders from the Commanding General, 4th Division, confirmed by Field Orders No. 26, relieved the brigade from duty with the 4th Division, and directed it to proceed to rest billets. The movement commenced at midnight, August 4th. . . .

The service of the ammunition throughout the operations was satisfactory. At only one time was there any shortage or prospective shortage of ammunition, and in this sole instance the difficulty was remedied before the reserve at the batteries was encroached upon. The 101st Ammunition Train, supplemented by the personnel of the 101st Trench Mortar Battery, functioned admirably throughout the entire period in the service of ammunition. . . .

The spirit shown by the personnel of the brigade was eminently satisfactory, and typified the high character of the American soldier. The batteries performed their duties with alertness and energy. Even after the members of the brigade saw their infantry withdrawn to rest, while they themselves were required to go on, they did so with unflagging spirit and untiring zeal. Due to this spirit, the batteries were never late in getting into positions, calls for fire were answered within the shortest possible time; and even toward the end of the operations, when the change of position north from Sergy to Chery–Chartreuve was made, the zeal and energy of the officers and men were such that the batteries were in position before the main body of the infantry of the 4th Division arrived abreast of them.

It is of record, though not included in the Brigade Commander's formal report, that not a single case of straggling occurred in the artillery throughout this long advance under difficult conditions. More than forty kilometers the regiments moved forward, daily firing; and they had been actively employed in the Pas Fini Sector for ten days before they started their advance.

Bunnell's indispensable engineers, attached to the Corps, pounded along cheerfully at road-making in the forward zones day and night, until August 2; the 101st Field Signal Battalion also remained in, to sustain the general reputation of the American signal troops — an organization whose work and methods are called by competent French critics one of the outstanding achievements of our military effort which foreign services could copy to advantage. The 101st Trench Mortar Battery, as has been seen, labored splendidly at unfamiliar tasks.

But the infantry of the Division, immediately upon relief, was taken out of the fight. By easy stages the regiments moved back, first to the vicinity of Trugny Wood where the bivouac, as can be imagined, was indeed a gruesome one; then to other areas which had been crossed during the advance, until, after three days' marching, the two brigades were encamped and billeted in the vicinity of La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, along the shady borders of the winding Marne, Division Headquarters being established at Méry-sur-Marne. Here a pause was made for recuperation. Inspections were in order; the various means were set in motion to reëstablish smartness and alertness. And it was surprising to note how quickly the men were restored. A couple of good nights' sleep, a swim in the river, an afternoon's pass into La Ferté, and the work was done. The haggard soldiers who had stumbled down the roads leading out of dark La Fère Wood changed again to real men.

Their numbers were considerably reduced. The few stragglers rejoined; most of the missing were found to have been fighting in the ranks of other organizations, separated from their own in the confusion of battle. But the losses had been severe when one realizes that the Division began the offensive with little more than two thirds of its authorized strength. The figures are interesting (see p. 208).

The twenty per cent battle losses of the Division in a week's fighting were at least severe enough to prove that it was present when the "show" was going on, and that it played a prominent part in the grim, splendid drama. Of the missing, the great majority were later accounted for, as has been said; only a few were made prisoners — mainly in the town of Epieds.

For a fortnight the Division stayed in reserve. Then, on August 11, orders were issued for another move by rail; and the newspaper correspondent who had come from the gossip centers at Chaumont and Paris expressed a willingness to wager that, for the present, the Division

Casualties, Offensive commencing July 18, 1918

	Killed	*Seriously wounded*	*Slightly wounded*	*Gassed severely*	*Gassed slightly*	*Missing*	*Total*
Division Headquarters....	..	1	1	..	..	..	2
101st Machine-Gun Battalion.............	8	8	26	..	1	..	43
101st Infantry...........	54	127	111	20	232	41	585
102d Infantry...........	139	415	35	44	17	308	958
102d Machine-Gun Battalion.............	13	2	70	13	..	13	111
103d Infantry...........	176	307	290	18	335	74	1200
104th Infantry...........	115	331	151	54	55	54	760
103d Machine-Gun Battalion.............	18	3	83	8	..	10	122
101st Field Artillery......	19	7	18	6	10	..	60
102d Field Artillery......	23	19	13	2	3	1	61
103d Field Artillery......	13	5	42	..	2	..	62
101st Trench Mortar Battery................	1	..	2	..	..	..	3
101st Engineers..........	8	18	47	2	26	1	102
101st Field Signal Battalion.............	5	..	2	2	2	..	11
101st Ammunition Train..	2	2	2	..	..	..	6
101st Sanitary Train.....	..	..	3	..	16	..	19
51st F.A. Brigade Headquarters.............	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
Totals..............	594	1245	897	169	699	502	4106

This does not include the evacuation of sick and exhausted, about 1200.

was "out of the war." Eighteen kilometers of ground gained in the face of stubborn opposition; a handsome yield of prisoners and guns;[1] a difficult maneuver well accomplished; all objectives gained; its supply and evacuation service functioning admirably all the time; the public, pointed praise of the Army Commander — all this the Twenty-Sixth had to its credit, together with an honorable loss in action of some five thousand men. And for the moment the Division could be well content to rest on its laurels, nobly won.

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[1] The following captures were reported:
248 prisoners.
1 210-mm. howitzer.
2 177-mm. minenwerfer.
4 77-mm. minenwerfer.
1 small minenwerfer.
18 88-mm. field gun.
2 77-mm. field guns.
9 machine guns, complete.
14 machine guns, incomplete.
1 pontoon wagon train (for infantry foot-bridge), a large quantity of ammunition, consisting of shells of all calibers, and small-arms ammunition.

From the smiling region about La Ferté, and from where the little Ourcq drops into the Marne, the Division trundled down to a country even lovelier — north of Châtillon-sur-Seine, south of Bar-sur-Seine, along the beautiful river valley, with Division Headquarters established (on August 13) at Mussy-sur-Seine. An area well organized by a very efficient group of zone-majors and town-majors,[1] with ample drill grounds, and the Second Corps schools of Châtillon at hand, the country afforded every facility (including good rifle ranges) for training. And promptly the Division set to work, some of the regiments under new leaders. The effort of the Division Commander to give two of his Staff the advantage of serving with troops had brought down a sharp rebuke from General Headquarters. He had assigned his Chief of Staff to the command of the 104th Infantry on July 31, and the Division Inspector, Colonel H. P. Hobbs, had been sent to the 102d Infantry upon the relief of Colonel J. H. Parker on the same date, the latter destined to win, with a regiment in another division, the highest honors for personal gallantry in action. But promptly the Division Commander was reminded that he was without authority thus to assign officers of the General Staff or of the Inspector-General's Department; and so the new regimental commanders were returned to their duties at Headquarters. To the 102d Infantry came Colonel H. I. Bearss, an officer of the Marine Corps of established reputation; to the 104th Infantry was assigned Colonel G. McCaskey, soon to be transferred, however, following the recommendation of a board of inquiry. To the 101st Field Artillery was assigned Colonel A. T. Bishop, who remained in command for some three weeks. On August 13 Colonel M. E. Locke was transferred from the command of the 102d Field Artillery to duty at the schools. An effort is reported to have been made at this time to bring about the relief of General Cole (52d Infantry Brigade) and Colonel Logan (101st Infantry) on the grounds of deficiency in troop leadership; but such charges appeared to the Division Commander to be without foundation.

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[1] Of the Rents, Requisitions, and Claims Service.

Under the provisions of a Memorandum on training troops when out of the line,[1] two days were allowed for rest and the cleaning of arms and equipment. Clothing was issued; the men were bathed; the vehicles, animals, and billets were systematically cleaned and policed. Following this, a progressive programme of work was laid out for all units. The methods of open warfare dominated all study and drill. With the long period of position warfare now definitely concluded, the Division must look forward to a war of movement. For obtaining practice in maneuver there were directed weekly terrain exercises, the problems to be set by the Corps,[2] or by Division Headquarters for the smaller units. And favored by beautiful weather the work made good progress. The exercises were arranged to require the employment of all methods of communication, since it was in this respect that the Twenty-Sixth, like the other American divisions in the field, had found one of its greatest difficulties. By the employment of planes from the Châtillon aerodrome, good practice was obtained by the infantry in the methods of position-marking and signaling between an advanced line or a headquarters and a plane; a helpful demonstration of signaling devices and mechanical means of communication was given at the

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[1] Memorandum for Corps and Division Commanders, G.H.Q., August 5.

[2] Fifth Corps.

Second Corps Schools; and in the second divisional terrain exercise elaborate tests were made of the Division's skill in maintaining and extending communication lines, under the eye of high ranking officers of the Corps and from the training section at General Headquarters, who gave careful critiques on the conclusion of the exercise.

A large number of enlisted replacements were received at this time, many being transferred from other combat divisions in the area. Many hailed originally from the lower Mississippi Valley; and it was very interesting to note how quickly these Southerners were assimilated and caught the spirit of the Yankee Division. Drafted men, hastily trained, large numbers of these replacements were very deficient in military knowledge, some having never fired their rifles. But intensive training methods were at once applied. They all were given target practice, grenade and gas drills, with instruction in open-warfare formation, before the Division was called again to active duty.

No leaves were possible. In the days immediately following relief from the Aisne–Marne work, a few officers who were plainly suffering from overstrain were allowed forty-eight-hour passes. But in the Châtillon area there was work for everybody, since it was very evident from the character and intensity of the prescribed training programme that the Division was about to return to active duty; and for this all ranks must be ready.

The question of animal transport again became acute. The work of the Aisne–Marne drive had taken a heavy toll of the horses and mules, especially in the artillery and ammunition train. During the advance forage rations were so low that it was necessary to send all grain to the animals with the forward echelons, leaving those in rear to subsist on hay or by grazing. And so severe was the strain that, between August 13 and 22, eight hundred animals were evacuated by the Division Veterinary Corps, of which thirty died on the road in transit. Some issues of

French draft stock were received, both stallions and mares, heavy, fine-looking animals; but under the strain of gunfire and the conditions at the front they soon became exhausted in strength and had to be evacuated. In the Châtillon area forage again was so short that the quartermaster authorized supply officers to purchase hay and grain direct from French civilians.

A draft of twenty-three officers and seventy-two non-commissioned officers was selected at this time for return to the United States as instructors.

Changes in command and in the Staff, other than those already listed, included the following: Brigadier-General D. W. Aultman was transferred on August 15 from the command of the artillery brigade to the 166th Field Artillery Brigade,[1] being succeeded by Colonel O. W. B. Farr, formerly commanding the howitzer regiment of the Third Division. On August 1 Captain A. L. Forde was assigned to command the Headquarters Troop, succeeding Captain B. L. Ashby; Major W. K. Mackall, Assistant Chief of Staff, G–2, was transferred away from the Division, as was Captain W. B. Morgan, Assistant to G–3.

It was, in general, a period not only of brisk training, but also of reorganization and refitting. Through a pleasant succession of sunny days, in a most charming country, the battalions recovered the strength which the stern days above Château-Thierry had taken away. Spirits soared again; first anniversaries began to be celebrated;[2] and the men felt ready for any new calls which might be made upon them.

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[1] In Brigadier-General Aultman the Division lost one of its most distinguished officers. Of continuous service in the field artillery after 1894, he organized and trained the Cuban artillery between 1898 and 1906; he was a member of the military mission to Germany in 1914, returning in 1915. Following his service with the Twenty-Sixth Division, he filled various important corps and army artillery commands, becoming Chief of Artillery, Second Army. He was decorated with the Croix de Guerre with palm (twice), the Legion of Honor, and the Distinguished Service Medal.

[2] Notably that of the famous Military Police of the Division, a picked body of men from Massachusetts whose discipline, courage, and intelligence were of the grade attained by only the best troops in the American Expeditionary Force.

CHAPTER XV

THE SAINT-MIHIEL OFFENSIVE

THE Staff had just drafted plans for a terrain exercise to be held on August 27, when a warning order telephoned from Fifth Corps Headquarters directed the Division to prepare immediately for a movement "to another area" by rail, motor transport to go over the road. And the very next day Headquarters closed at Mussy-sur-Seine, and the loading of the troop trains began.

The purpose of the movement soon became evident enough. When the stations of Ligny-en-Barrois, Tronville, and Longeville-Nançois were announced in field orders as the detraining points; when it was given out that an advanced echelon of the Staff would be established at Bar-le-Duc, a glance at the map made it plain why the Division was being sent in that particular direction. A unit in the Fifth Corps of the just organized First American Army was the Division's new designation; and the first activity of that great force, under General Pershing's direction as a field commander, was plainly to be the reduction of the Saint-Mihiel salient, long before determined as the scene of independent American endeavor, and so quite generally understood.

In the region between Bar-le-Duc and Souilly, about Commercy and Toul, an immense troop concentration was made all through the last part of August and early days of September. Every night all roads were crowded with endless motor trains of infantry or columns of artillery. Units of the Twenty-Sixth, on detraining, had to be marched immediately away, to clear the neighborhood of the railway for other troops; one encountered in the blackness of the night along the dust-choked roads, or halted mysteriously in the streets of a village, soldiers belonging to American divisions which one did not even dream were in France. Stringent orders to take advantage of cover against aeroplane observation prevailed everywhere; troops could march only between the hours of eight at night and four in the morning; they camped in woods very generally instead of being billeted in villages; the whole countryside was alive with them as soon as darkness fell, where by day scarcely a sign betrayed the presence of the scores of thousands who crowded into the region roundabout the edge of the Woevre Plain and on the Heights of the Meuse, between Pont-à-Mousson and the southeastern rim of the defenses of Verdun.

Steadily the Division pushed northward. Under the traffic regulations of the Corps, it could use only the roads that paralleled the famous highway between Bar-le-Duc and Verdun — that *Via Sacra*, by which alone Verdun was kept connected with the outer world for months in 1916, and which now was reserved for motor transport only. Frequent steep and long grades made the night marches exceedingly difficult for the artillery, badly horsed as it was; and all animal-drawn transport had hard going; but with the host of troops which were being pushed into the area it was necessary to employ every road allotted to the Division's use, whether it was good or bad.

Northward (past Pierrefitte, Vavincourt, Chaumont) rolled the dusty columns of men and guns, the 52d Brigade leading.[1] Past Souilly, the Army Headquarters town, they plodded and thence eastward one march more, till by September 3 the Division found itself above the old religious shrine of Benoite Vaux, in the vicinity and east of Sommedieue, in which village headquarters was established. The movement, ordered to be completed by September 4, had been delayed at the outset for fifteen hours by a train wreck near Châtillon, and afterwards by the congestion on the roads; but it was of first importance in such a large troop movement that the Corps' march-table should be accurately kept; and the Division was up with its schedule in reaching the Sommedieue area. It had been a hard march; but the troops had stood it well, though there was suffering among the none too sturdy animals.

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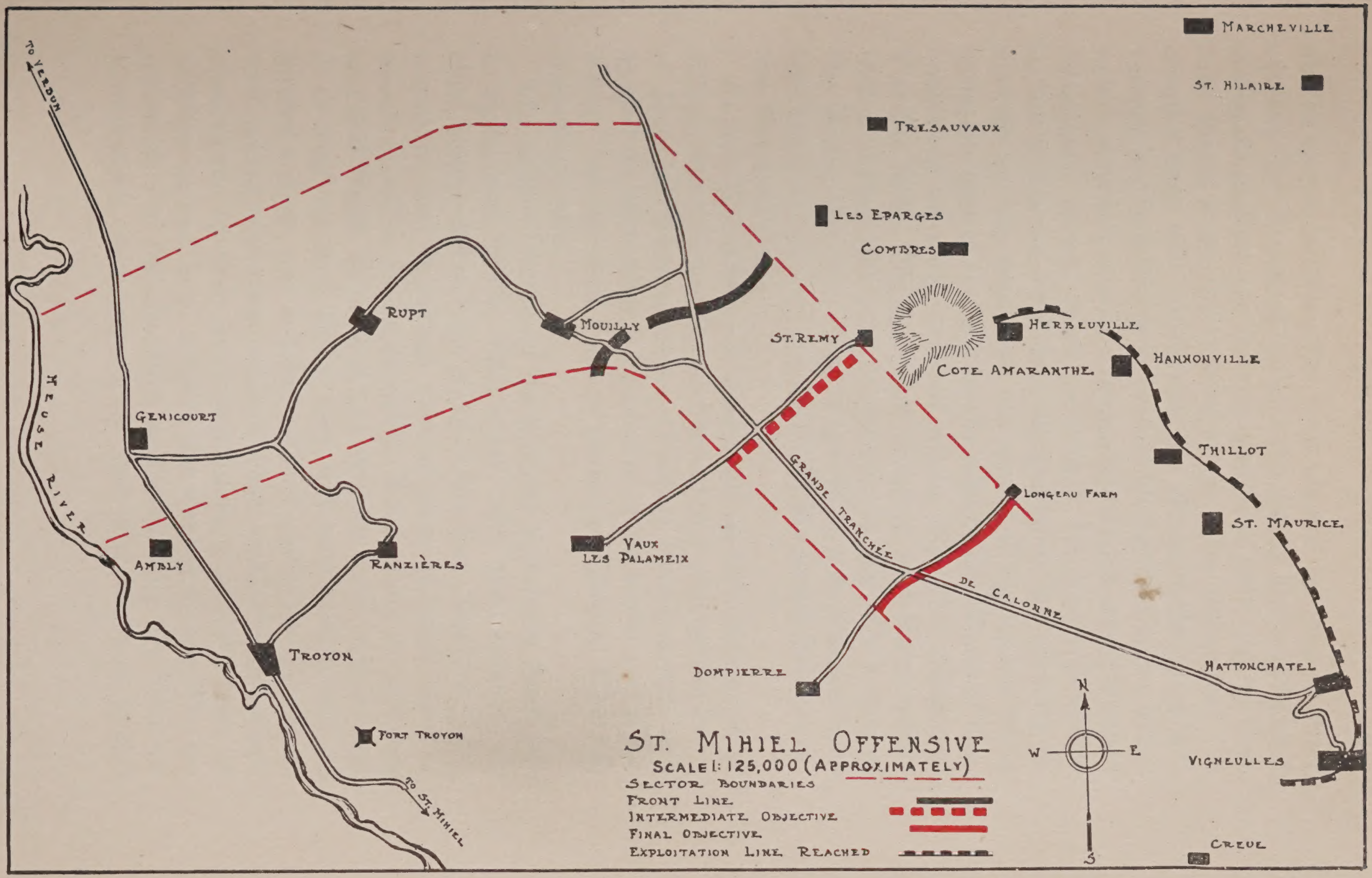
[1] The 1st Battalion, 101st Infantry, was moved up in trucks in advance of the rest of the infantry, to expedite a relief.

For a day or two a pause ensued. Reconnaissance was made of the sector between Haudiomont and Mont-sous-les-Côtes inclusive, at the extreme left, or northwesterly hinge, of the salient. To the left, beyond Haudiomont, began the defenses of Verdun, sweeping away in a great arc round the city. Directly in front, below the Heights of the Meuse, where the Allies' line ran, lay Bonzée, the important village of Fresnes, with Etain out on the far-stretching Woevre plain, and on the distant eastern horizon the uplands toward Chambley and Briey. On the right jutted out from the plateau of the Heights the grim spur of Les Eparges, dominating the whole countryside.

It was the best sector the Division had seen. The commanding site of its trench lines, their excellent upkeep, the admirable camps back in the clean woods toward Sommedieue, even the warm, dry weather, gave promise of comfort to the men and every advantage in launching the intended attack. On the steep, pine-clad hillside, adjoining Sommedieue on the east, the French had constructed a very fine divisional headquarters; while an extensive hospital system, abundant water, well-organized supply and administration facilities with railhead at Ancemont and Rattantout, combined to insure that the troops' every need would be fulfilled or even anticipated.

But hardly had the preliminary reconnaissance been made, looking to occupation of this part of the line, looking also toward an extensive advance out into the Plain, before plans were changed. It was evident that some great project had been in preparation. The day after the Division established itself in the vicinity of Sommedieue, there crept out from among the pine-trees, along a spur track, a monster piece of railroad artillery of thirteen inches caliber which went leisurely into position; a battalion of tanks ambled into the cover of the woods in a ravine. The confidential staff maps from American Headquarters showed ambitious objectives indeed; in the areas farther to the rear, along the Meuse, there had been a continual in-pouring of troops of all arms. But different counsels prevailed. It was decided merely to effect a reduction of the salient to the line (approximately) of Fresnes–Dampvitoux–Pagny-sur-Moselle; and in accordance with this purpose the mission and objective of the Twenty-Sixth were altered. The direction of its attack was not east, but southeast. The sector which the Division should hold was that which adjoined the Sommedieue line on the right; and there, on the nights of September 4–5, the relief was effected of the French Second Dismounted Cavalry Division. The latter moved to its own immediate right, as the Twenty-Sixth came in; and on the left of the Americans was posted the Fifteenth Colonial Division.

The sector taken over extended approximately from what had been the village of Les Eparges southeasterly to Loclont Wood. On the left were the classic fighting grounds of Saint-Remy village and Eparges Wood, where the French had struggled desperately in 1915; on the right the Division's line, in front of the village of Mouilly and the sinister Ravin de France, was merged in the dense thickets of Saint-Remy Wood. It was a confused area of spurs and ravines, this plateau of the Heights of the Meuse from which the enemy was now to be driven. Threaded by roads of none too good construction, intricately defended by huge bands of barbed wire strung through the trees and thickets, and by many concreted machine-gun nests, the zone of attack was not easy to traverse. The woods were exceedingly dense, heavy underbrush having grown up to



ST. MIHIEL OFFENSIVE

SCALE 1:125,000 (APPROXIMATELY)

fill the spaces between the trees blasted by four years of artillery fire. In rear of his lines the enemy had constructed elaborate shelters and battery positions, with typical German forest lodges for headquarters. The sector had for months been very quiet, and the always industrious adversary had had leisure to perfect his light railways, water points, munition depots, even his cemeteries, which boasted elaborately carved stone memorials. He was well served in the matter of back-area organization, for directly in his rear lay the important rail center of Vigneulles, while along the base of the hills on the edge of the Woevre Plain, connected up with excellent roads, were the villages of Viéville, Billy, Thillot, Saint-Maurice, and Hannonville, with a second row a short distance in rear. On a spur of the Meuse Heights, above Vigneulles, was situated Hattonchâtel, one of the most useful of his observatories over the Woevre Plain.

At first Genicourt was designated as the Headquarters village; but this was almost immediately changed in favor of Rupt-en-Woevre, where Division Headquarters was opened on September 5. Command of the sector — "Rupt Sector" on the staff maps — passed to General Edwards three days later.

The order of battle of the infantry regiments, from left to right, was: 104th, 103d, 101st, with 102d Infantry in close reserve behind the right of the line. Machine guns, engineers, and signalmen were all close at hand, camped about Mouilly, in Amblonville Wood, Côte de Senoux, and Soff Wood. Never had the Division been concentrated in so small an area. But it soon was very evident why so limited a space was available. Every night, and by day as well, taking advantage of the showery weather which made observation by the enemy impossible, a steady stream of artillery poured in to support the coming attack. The requirements of the situation, as reported by the Division Commander, were generously met; and when at length the infantry moved forward it was to the accompaniment of fire not only from the familiar divisional guns, but also from those of the following organizations: 13th and 77th Field Artillery (4th Division); 9 batteries, 203d Artillery (French); 5th R.A.P. (220-millimeter howitzers); 2 batteries, 73d Artillery (270-millimeter howitzers); 1 battery, 176th Artillery (240-millimeter trench mortars). In the sodden, muddy glens and wooded hollows, right in the open along the roadside under a sketchy camouflage of leafy boughs, the guns were put in position — in places almost hub to hub, while by *décauville* from Genicourt, by truck and wagon, there was carried in a store of shells in seemingly endless amounts. The whole area was alive with preparation. Not a copse, not a road-cutting, but what was in use to conceal men, guns, or material; the villages of Mouilly and Rupt were packed; the camps in the woods overflowed with troops. For a week the Division prepared itself for the duty expected of it, very little molested by the enemy in the trenches opposite, its main preoccupation being to contrive some sort of shelter from the almost steady rain.

The story of the share taken by the Twenty-Sixth in the operation to reduce the Saint-Mihiel salient is less an account of heavy fighting than of a maneuver in which new situations, continually presented, were promptly and efficiently met. It was an operation in which the Division Commander exercised personal direction at all times; in which large masses of troops were handled smoothly; in which the service of intelligence, flank communication, and the coöperation of all arms were all maintained unbroken and efficient, as well as communication with the Corps Headquarters in rear. It was an operation of the type which delights the staff officer — in which every movement goes according to schedule, in which, moreover, the unexpected is met and turned to advantage promptly, in which control is never lost.

The general plan contemplated a converging movement against the south and west sides of the salient, the position of the Twenty-Sixth being on almost the extreme left of the line, with direction of attack southeast. On its right was the Second Dismounted Cavalry Division, on its left, the Fifteenth Colonial Division. Moving astride of an axial road, called the "Grande Tranchée de Calonne," in the direction of Hattonchâtel and Vigneulles for the most part through dense woods, the Division had for its immediate mission to clear this part of the Heights of the Meuse, and by thus breaking the salient at its western pillar to aid in effecting the German withdrawal from the whole area. The Fifteenth Colonial, in the meantime, was to obtain possession of Saint-Remy, Côte Amaranthe, and Combres, from which a hold could be assured on the crests above Herbeuville, Saint-Maurice, and Billy-sous-les-Côtes, thus compelling a German retirement to the Woevre Plain. On the right the Second Dismounted Cavalry Division had Creue as its ultimate objective, though the woods and rough slopes about Dompierre and Deuxnouds had first to be cleared methodically. In brief, the three divisions moving abreast had the duty of pushing the enemy off the Meuse Heights from the line Les Eparges–Mouilly–Ranzières to the line Saint-Maurice–Hattonchâtel–Creue, the general scope of the operation being outlined in Battle Instructions No. 1, Headquarters Fifth Army Corps, received at the Division on September 6.

On the basis of the Corps' order for the actual beginning of the operation,[1] the Division's attack order [2] was issued on September 11. The movement was to be made with three infantry regiments in line, each with one battalion forward, the other two being echeloned in support and reserve, except in the case of the 101st Infantry, which had two battalions in the attacking line and one in support.

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[1] Field Order 17, Headquarters Fifth Army Corps.

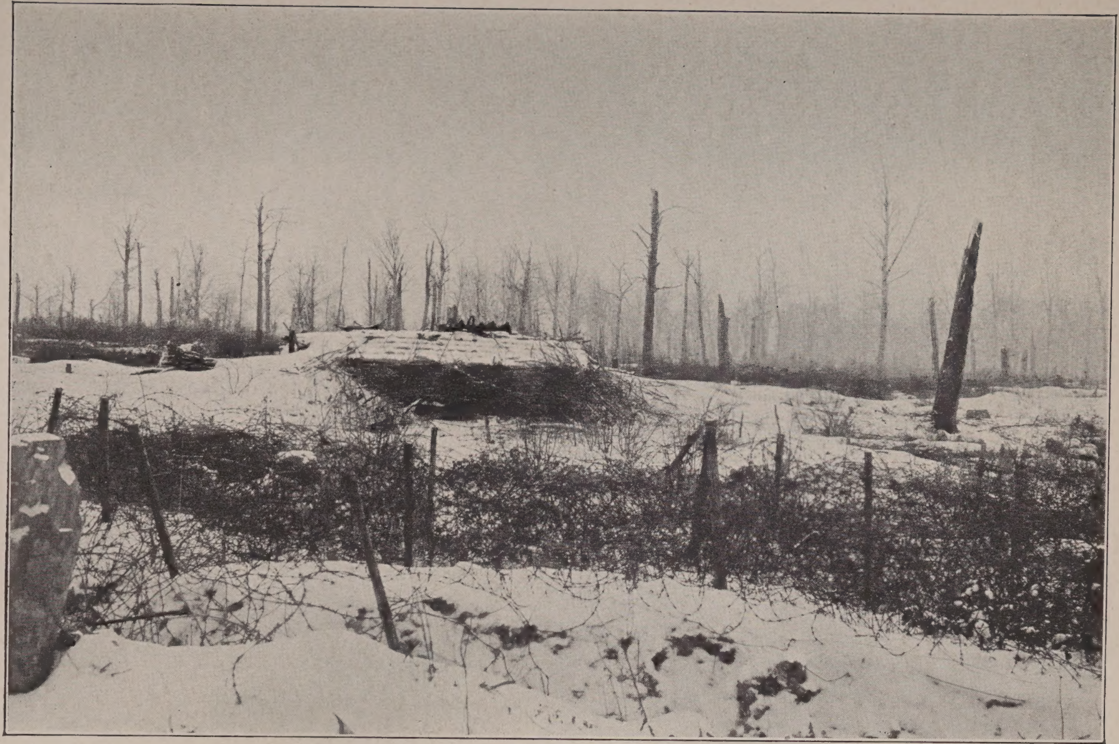
[2] Field Order 77, Headquarters Twenty-Sixth Division.

The Division reserve (102d Infantry and 101st Machine-Gun Battalion) was kept close at hand, well forward. To each front-line battalion were assigned a machine-gun company, Stokes mortar and 37-mm. platoons, a section of smoke and thermite troops of the 1st Gas Regiment, one half company of engineers, and one accompanying 75-mm. field piece. The engineers were equipped with bengalore torpedoes to assist in breaching the enemy wire, of which heavy bands extended all through the woods. The artillery preparation was to be very thorough. For seven hours it was to play on the German defenses, communications, and assembly points, save for two intervals, one of five, one of ten minutes; then it would lay a rolling barrage in front of the attacking infantry at zero hour, 8 A.M.

With an intermediate objective along the Vaux–Saint-Remy road (where the infantry, inevitably disordered by its attack, would re-form), the Division's objective for the first day was the line of the Longeau Farm–Dompierre-au-Bois road, about six kilometers distant from the parallel of departure.

The night of September 11–12 was dark with rain. Under cover of the weather preparations had gone forward methodically to the very last moment. At the divisional combat post of command, established in a dripping dugout on a hillside above Rupt-en-Woevre, everything was in readiness long before the hour; even the venerable village *curé*, who had remained at his post all through the war, was welcomed along with the usual information officers from the flanking divisions and from the Corps. The service of intelligence had been efficiently reorganized by a new Assistant Chief of Staff, G–2, Captain (later Lieutenant-Colonel) H. R. Horsey; and from long before the actual start of the combat, informing messages regarding the enemy and the front-line situation were coming in from the divisional observation groups.

The enemy was singularly passive. It would appear



PILL-BOX, SAINT-REMY WOOD

from even the official German reports and bulletins that, while a large-scale attack on the Saint-Mihiel salient was regarded as in preparation, there was uncertainty as to the probable date and the point of the main attack. He held the southern face of the salient very lightly (two divisions occupying a front of twenty-two kilometers); another division (77th) was greatly reduced in strength; another (33d Reserve) had suffered so many recent desertions of its Alsace-Lorrainers that its reliability was seriously in question. Opposite the Twenty-Sixth lay the 60th and 82d Landwehr regiments of the Thirteenth Landwehr Division, who showed, as has been said, only a somewhat perfunctory interest in the preparations going on behind the American lines. It is possible that these had been better concealed, thanks to the rain and mist and wooded country, than one had dared to hope; perhaps the enemy's heart was gone. But at all events, the first point noticed, after the attack started, was the feeble enemy reaction, especially of his artillery.

At one o'clock on September 12 hell broke loose from our own guns. Methodically directed on trench lines, roads, assembly points, and places in the rear areas, the fire was uninterrupted for seven hours, save for two brief periods in which sound ranging was carried out. The pauses were followed, respectively, by five and ten minutes gas concentration on back areas. Five gaps in the enemy's wire were to be cut by the "75s" and one by the 155-mm. mortars, which was done satisfactorily; while other openings were made by the engineers by bengalore torpedoes, and by the infantry using wire-cutters at the time of the actual attack. The 101st Trench Mortar Battery employed thermite shells, which scattered on bursting a white fire of terrific intensity. Trouble was had with the mounts of the mortars, a number of which broke under the strain of firing; but the battery delivered nevertheless its full quota of rounds. At eight o'clock, behind a rolling barrage, the infantry went over. On the left, Cole's brigade had to overcome considerable opposition from machine guns almost from the start. The Senegalese battalions of the Fifteenth French Colonial Division made slow progress against the formidable slopes of Amaranthe Hill; and this — because it was necessary to maintain touch with the French — had the effect of further hampering Cole's advance; but nevertheless the 52d Brigade, on the north side of the axial Tranchée de Calonne, moved steadily ahead across country which afforded little cover, when it was not covered by dense woods threaded with wire. On the right the 101st Infantry advanced for about a kilometer with little opposition. On neither section of the front was there encountered any artillery reaction worthy the name. The mopping-up parties, of the second waves of attack, took prisoners at will, dazed by the artillery bombardment and eager to surrender.

It was on the enemy's main resistance line that the right of the Twenty-Sixth first ran into anything like real opposition, which took the form of machine-gun fire from the concreted nests and from the so-called Kiel, Essen, and Stettin Trenches, and from Prusse Trench on the left. By degrees, however, flanking out the machine guns, the 101st Infantry got forward to the day's intermediate objective, the road between Vaux-les-Palameix and Saint-Remy, by 10.15 o'clock; but here a brief halt was made. The leading battalions had become considerably disorganized by the advance through the tangled woods and by the fighting; so the reserve battalion was ordered forward, and from the Division reserve, which had been kept close at hand behind the advance, the 1st Battalion, 102d Infantry, was ordered to pass through the line and continue the attack.

On the left the 52d Infantry Brigade also made good progress. It met a solid resistance from the machine guns in Le Chanot Wood; but once this was overcome, the two regiments (104th on the left, 103d on the right) moved along without undue trouble. Its left flank was in the air. True, the French had taken the village of Saint-Remy by 11.30 o'clock; but they had great difficulty on Amaranthe Hill, and could not proceed at the same rate as the more fortunate Americans. Moving ahead, however, with combat patrols covering the left flank, the latter got to the first objective (the road between Longeau Farm and Dompierre-aux-Bois) about seven o'clock in the evening.

In the afternoon a change in the plan of the general advance had been determined upon. At 15.15 o'clock (quarter after three) there were received from the Corps orders [1] prescribing that the Twenty-Sixth should take over from the French division on its left the territory which the latter had captured between Herbeuville and Dommartin, the French not advancing for the present beyond the line Hannonville–Longeau Farm. A more extensive programme had been laid out for this division (Fifteenth Colonial); but the severe opposition it had early encountered made it impossible to meet the requirements of the original plan, and therefore the Americans were called upon to assist in furthering the advance on the left.

A practical method of effecting this purpose was determined upon at a conference between General Hennocque, in command of the Second Dismounted Cavalry Division (on the right of the Twenty-Sixth), and General Edwards, at whose command post the French general called late in the afternoon. Realizing that the purpose of the two divisions operating together was to clear this portion of the Meuse Heights, the French commander proposed, since both the Twenty-Sixth and his own division had attained their prescribed objectives, that the two should swing their advance to the left, or north, and clear the high land in the direction of Saint-Maurice, whither the bulk of the enemy forces was apparently retreating. To this proposal the Division Commander at once assented, the village of Thillot being selected as the objective for the Twenty-Sixth's advance. A message explaining the plan was at once carried forward by a staff officer to the commander of the 51st Infantry Brigade; another to Cole (52d Brigade) advised the latter of the new purpose; and the operation was on the point of being started when a telephoned message from Corps Headquarters, received at 19.30 o'clock, completely altered the situation.

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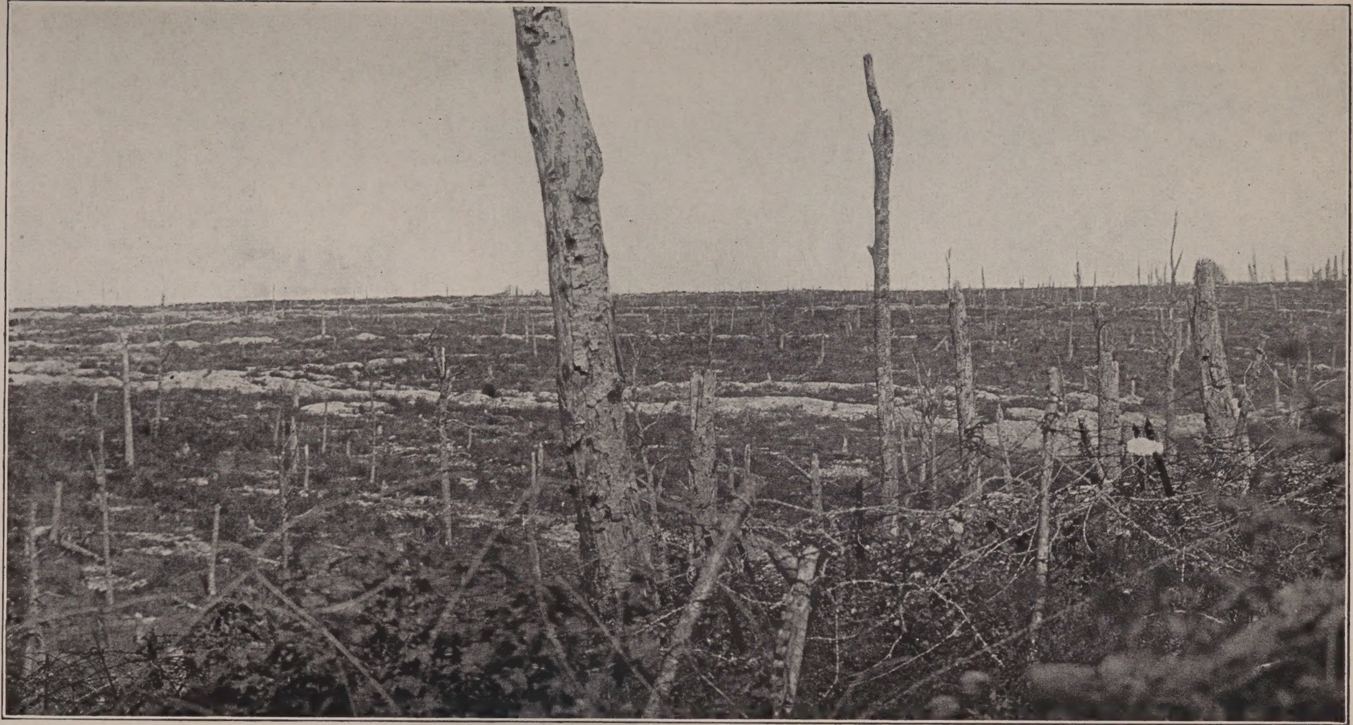
[1] Field Orders No. 19, Headquarters Fifth Army Corps, September 12, 1918.

The Division was to continue its advance straight through, said the Corps, along the forest road of the Grande Tranchée de Calonne, to Hattonchâtel and Vigneulles. From the south the First Division was advancing, and the two forces were to meet at Vigneulles, thus pinching out the western side of the salient. Thus ran the telephone message from the Corps Chief of Staff; and it sufficed to get action instantly. In a moment the Division Commander was in communication personally with the Headquarters of his most advanced brigade (51st), where now the regiment of the Division reserve (102d Infantry) was the leading unit. The movement to the left must be stopped; a new formation must be made; the advance to Vigneulles must be started without a second's delay. Personally General Edwards sent forward his emphatic orders to Shelton; personally he set in motion all the machinery for the new movement, communicating his own energy to all concerned with such effectiveness that long before the written orders came from Corps Headquarters the movement had been begun. At 8.10 P.M. the Division Commander got word to Shelton (51st Brigade), through an aide at Brigade Headquarters; at 9 P.M. he was in telephone communication with Cole, on the left, directing the latter to move out by any roads available on the left and rear of the Vigneulles column, with the line Hattonchâtel–Saint-Maurice (inclusive) as an objective. By 9.30 P.M. the advance troops of Shelton's brigade had started along the



NO MAN'S LAND OVER WHICH THE TWENTY-SIXTH DIVISION ADVANCED NEAR LES EPARGES

Grande Tranchée de Calonne. Such, in brief, was the manner in which the march was inaugurated. It is interesting to note the little elapsed time between the Corps' telephone call and the beginning of the 102d Infantry's movement; to mark the promptness and the coöperation of all concerned in carrying out the Corps Commander's order. A sudden situation, a change of orders, a wholly new disposition of the Division's combat elements, were all met, put into operation, and completed within two hours. This with the telephones working irregularly, with roads almost impassable even for the staff cars and motor-cycles, with several of the staff officers (including the Chief) absent from Headquarters with the advanced infantry arranging for the previously ordered change of direction.

By magic the Division Commander's word spread down to every battalion. It was to be a race between the Twenty-Sixth and their old friends of the First, with Vigneulles for the goal; to the Twenty-Sixth had been given the task of closing in the west side of the salient — the Division was depended on to clinch a great American victory. Quickly Shelton made his dispositions; with no confusion the troops formed up and started, every man eager and ready. Leading the advance was the 102d Infantry. Behind the regiment came the Machine-Gun Company of the 101st Infantry and the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion, closely followed by the remainder of the Division reserve (101st Machine-Gun Battalion). The latter could not use its motor cars, owing to the condition of the roads, so carried its guns by hand. A main body, comprising, according to the order [1] one battalion of the 101st Infantry, the 101st Field Artillery, and then the remaining battalions of the 101st Infantry, was to follow the advance; but as it was impracticable for the moment to get the guns forward, the infantry went on without them.

Along the littered highway, in route column, with advance and flank guards, hurried the 102d. In the copses and hollows there might be clouds of snipers or groups of machine guns left to cover the enemy retreat. There was no time and no opportunity for reconnaissance; to right and left it was none too easy to maintain communication with the Second (French) Division and the 52d Brigade. But the word was "Get forward!" and forward the column moved, electrified by the Division Commander's pungent orders, needing no spur but the knowledge that it had an important task ahead and a race to win.

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[1] Field Order No. 78, September 12, 1918.

By the time the column was well under way, the written order came in from Corps Headquarters:

Headquarters Fifth Army Corps (G-3 No. 25-30)
American Expeditionary Forces
France, 12 *September* 1918
(20.00 *hours*)

From: Chief of Staff, 5th Army Corps.
To: Commanding General, 26th Division.
Subject: Closing of Gap between Western and Southern attacks.

1. The 1st Division from the southern attack is moving on Vigneulles to join with you in closing the gap between the two attacks.

2. The Corps Commander directs that you continue the advance along the Grande Tranchée de Calonne so that by daylight to-morrow (September 13th) you will have established contact with the 1st Division and will have one regiment in Hattonchâtel.

W. B. Burtt, *Brigadier-General*
Chief of Staff

THE/W
Rec'd 26 Div G-3
12 Sep 1918
23.20 o'clock

On the right Hennocque's Second Division of Dismounted Cavalry (8th, 12th, 5th Regiments of Cuirassiers) ploughed ahead toward Creue, Chaillon, and Lamorville. In rear the engineers were working madly to make a passage over the wrecked roads for the chafing artillerymen.

Through the night, leaving patrols on every cross-road, gathering in prisoners as it marched, the 102d Infantry pushed along the Grande Tranchée. Ahead of the column rode Colonel Bearss, with his adjutant, the French information officer, regimental intelligence officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Alfonte (the Division signal officer), and three or four messengers. Just after two o'clock on September 13 this party stormed into Hattonchâtel, which had been set on fire by the enemy, captured then and there a loaded truck train and a machine-gun crew, too surprised to offer resistance. Into blazing Vigneulles, at the foot of the hill below Hattonchâtel, marched the regiment before three o'clock. Strong patrols, with machine-gun sections, were immediately sent to the southward, toward Creue and Heudicourt; and it was in the latter village that contact was made later in the morning with elements of the First Division. The race was to the Twenty-Sixth. To the Corps Commander, who had said that General Pershing wanted the Division to be in Vigneulles by daylight, General Edwards had given an assurance that his men would be there at four o'clock at the latest; and his men had made good their leader's promise handsomely.

Comments on this fine performance of the 102d Infantry by those high in command followed, generous in their appreciation. On September 18 the Fifth Army Corps, in general orders, published the following citation:

> 1. During the recent operations for the reduction of the Saint-Mihiel salient, one regiment in particular of the Twenty-Sixth Division should be mentioned as having acquitted itself in a most inspiring manner. The 102d Infantry (Colonel Hiram I. Bearss commanding) was ordered late in the evening to march at once on Vigneulles, in order to close the remaining gap between the two attacks.
>
> The regiment marched five miles in darkness through woods infested with the enemy, captured 280 prisoners, and completed its mission long before daylight. The main roads of the salient were cut off, and no more of the enemy could escape.
>
> This fine example of courage and soldierly acceptance of battle

conditions is worthy of emulation. The Corps Commander congratulates them and looks forward with confidence to a continuation of their good work.

By command of Major-General Cameron

W. B. Burtt, *Brigadier-General Chief of Staff*

To the commanding officer of the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion the general in command of the 51st Infantry Brigade penned the following letter, which bears reproduction not only as a generous appreciation by a superior of the assistant's work, but also as admirably summarizing that part of the Division's action in the Saint-Mihiel offensive which attracted most attention:

Headquarters 51st Infantry Brigade
26th Division, American Expeditionary Forces
September 15, 1918

Dear Major Murphy: The march of the leading elements of this brigade, consisting of the 102d Infantry and the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion, on the night of September 12–13, 1918, from our position at the close of the first day in the attack on the Saint-Mihiel salient, for more than nine kilometers along the Grande Tranchée de Calonne to Hattonchâtel and Vigneulles, was of such unique and important character, and was performed in such efficient and spirited manner, that I desire to place on record my personal appreciation of this accomplishment.

Our orders required the brigade to pursue the retreating enemy and to reach Vigneulles by daylight on the morning of the 13th and there gain contact with our forces advancing from the south, and thereby prevent the escape to the north of any bodies of the enemy still in the salient. To have attempted to push forward a line covering our whole sector would have meant, in view of the woods and difficulty of the terrain, to fail in the accomplishment of our mission. The only alternative was to push boldly forward on the only accessible road through unknown hostile country, losing for the time being liaison with the elements of our forces on our right and left, and exposing the advance elements of this brigade to the possibility of being cut off and surrounded by the enemy. This alternative was chosen, and the 102d Infantry and your Machine-Gun Battalion were selected to lead the advance.

The results are known to you. You took up the march about 21 o'clock on the night of the 12th. Before 2 o'clock the following morning the leading elements of the column were in Vigneulles. Hattonchâtel and Vigneulles were completely in our possession by 3 o'clock. Soon afterwards the mission of the brigade had been completely accomplished. The roads leading from the southwest had been blocked. The surrounding towns had been garrisoned, our patrols seeking contact with our forces from the south were in the plain below the heights, and later this contact was established. Many prisoners and a large supply of stores fell into our hands.

I congratulate you and your battalion upon this success and upon the bravery and fine spirit manifest throughout its accomplishment.

Very sincerely yours
George H. Shelton
Brigadier-General, U.S.A., Commanding

Early on the 13th it was possible to realize what had been accomplished. From Vigneulles northwesterly the Twenty-Sixth had secured possession of the Meuse Heights as far as Combres. From Hattonchâtel, occupied by the 101st Infantry about nine o'clock, one could look across the Woevre Plain, where many of the villages had been set on fire by the retreating enemy, and catch the flash of Allied guns harrying the foe's rear-guards. In the villages nestling in the ravines at the foot of the Heights, such as Hannonville or Viéville, a civilian population, freed from four years of slavery, welcomed our men as saviors. The 52d Infantry Brigade, stubbornly forcing a way through the woods on the north side of the Grande Tranchée, had debouched at dawn on the edge of the hills, and before noon had pushed patrols far out to Marcheville, Saint-Hilaire, Damvillers, and Butgneville, the Brigade Commander scouting forward with the foremost. Less spectacular than the work of the 51st Brigade, that done by the Maine and western Massachusetts regiments was exceedingly efficient and well conducted, while the men's aggressive spirit carried the brigade's advance so far that its final outpost line of September 13 had to be considerably withdrawn to conform to the general plan. Especially notable was the work of the 101st Engineers. To them should go the credit of effecting the repairs to the utterly wrecked roads in the Ravin de France in front of Mouilly, on the Grande Tranchée, and between Vaux and Saint-Remy which made it possible to get the artillery forward. Torn by German mines into yawning craters, blown apart by shell-fire till they were no longer recognizable as roads at all, these priceless bits of highway were yard by yard made passable for the guns, so that by 2 P.M. of the 12th the first of them got forward, and early next day the whole artillery brigade had moved forward to new positions along the edge of the Heights.

The prisoners captured numbered about 2400. Completely broken in morale, they surrendered in groups. Two of the divisional observers brought in thirty-nine; three field officers and thirty-two other officers joined the irregular procession which the Military Police shepherded back to Rupt-en-Woevre for preliminary examination. A regimental band was taken in Vigneulles. Of material there was a vast quantity captured. In their retreat the Germans left behind large stores of food, engineering and railway material, and whole depots of ammunition, as well as field pieces and machine guns. In Saint-Remy Wood, as well as in the villages, there were uncovered an endless amount of salvage of all descriptions, of which our men most promptly possessed themselves. It seemed too good to be true when real beer and mineral water came to light; the transport officers could not believe their good fortune when told that seventy horses and a large number of motor-trucks had also been secured.

The price paid had been small. Casualties were not numerous. A deplorable incident, caused by a slip in the communication between higher Headquarters and the air service, contributed some thirty wounded to the list. Just before noon of the 13th a bombing plane passed over Vigneulles under orders to drop bombs on the Germans who were believed to be still in occupation, with the consequence that the deadly missiles fell on a battalion of the 102d Infantry. But, generally speaking, the absence of enemy artillery fire, and the fact that his machine guns did not oppose a really determined resistance, save at intervals, enabled the Division to accomplish its original purpose, and brilliantly to take advantage of new opportunities with a minimum of losses.

One cannot conclude any account of the action of September 12–13 without mention of what the victory in the Saint-Mihiel salient meant to the civilian population of the area freed by the American Army. One feels that official thanks could hardly be expressed more feelingly than in the following letter, written by the parish priest of the stricken village of Rupt, where Division Headquarters was established for the Saint-Mihiel operation. To the Division Commander he writes:

Rupt-en-Woevre, September 13, 1918

Sir: Your gallant American Division has just set us free. Since September, 1914, the barbarians have held the Heights of the Meuse; have foully murdered three hostages from Mouilly; have shelled Rupt; and on July 23, 1915, forced its inhabitants to scatter to the four corners of France.

I, who remain at my little listening-post upon the advice of my Bishop, feel certain, Sir, that I do but speak for Monseigneur Ginisty, Lord Bishop of Verdun, my parishioners of Rupt, Mouilly and Genicourt, and the people of this vicinity, in conveying to you and your associates the heartfelt and unforgettable gratitude of all.

Several of your comrades lie at rest in our truly Christian and French soil.

Their ashes shall be cared for as if they were our own. We shall cover their graves with flowers, and shall kneel by them as their own families would do, with a prayer to God to reward with eternal glory these heroes fallen on the field of honor, and to bless the Twenty-Sixth Division and generous America.

Be pleased, Sir, to accept the expression of my profound respect.

A. Leclerc
Curé of Rupt-en-Woevre

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE — MARCHEVILLE

WITHIN a few days after the conclusion of the Saint-Mihiel operation certain minor readjustments of the sector to be held by the Twenty-Sixth, on the edge of the Meuse Heights, were made by order of the Corps.[1] Between the Fifteenth Colonial (later the Thirty-Ninth) and the Second Dismounted Cavalry Divisions (all French) on left and right, the Twenty-Sixth settled down to the occupation of the military crest between Fresnes and Thillot-sous-les-Côtes. With the four infantry regiments in line, each echeloned in depth, a chain of outposts was also established in the Woevre Plain at Saulx, Wadonville, and various commanding points between; the line was named the Troyon Sector, and to the regimental sub-sectors were given good Yankee titles like Augusta, Concord, Montpelier, and Providence. Considerable work was done toward organizing the principal resistance line on the Heights, wire being strung and strong points established. As much use as possible was made of the former German camps and dugouts scattered through the area; but living conditions, owing to the almost continuous bad weather, were difficult, and the health of the men, owing to the presence of influenza, began to give some concern. Notable in this regard was the personal interest of General Blondlat, the Corps Commander. Almost daily he would make the trip from distant Saint-Mihiel to the woods where the Americans were camped; closely he questioned the officers as to food, clothing, the arrival of the mail, canteen facilities, arrangements made to get daily newspapers. Attentively he would listen, encouraging the freest discussion; and it is known that his reports and recommendations to the First Army authorities were prompt and full.

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[1] The Second Colonial Corps (French) with Headquarters at Saint-Mihiel. The Division passed under its orders on September 14.

For a week or so the sector was quiet. There was daily harassing fire by the enemy artillery, for the Germans returned to positions in and about Riaville, Marcheville, Butgneville, and Saint-Hilaire, when it became evident that the American success was not to be followed beyond the edge of the hills. They sent over quantities of gas, which made much trouble for the garrisons in such places as Herbeuville, Hannonville, or Saulx. Patrolling was very active; and on two occasions somewhat elaborate local raids to make prisoners were undertaken against Saint-Hilaire and one on Warville Wood, by detachments of the 102d Infantry. But there was no long delay before another action of real importance was to fall to the share of the Yankee Division, as part of the general American offensive.

September 22 a conference of Division Commanders, their Chiefs of Staff, and Chiefs of Artillery was held at General Blondlat's Headquarters, when the Corps Commander read to the gathering the plan he had received[1] of the Meuse–Argonne offensive of the First American Army, with the orders for the participation of the Second Colonial Corps in the first day's attack.

The pertinent paragraph read: "The Second Colonial Corps will hold the front of Bois le Chauffour inclusive to Mesnil exclusive. The Second Colonial Corps will make a demonstration along its front, launching an artillery bombardment as well as making extensive raids at H hour." This was interpreted to mean that the raids on the front of each division should have such weight behind them as would mislead the enemy as to the actual point of the general attack through the Argonne Forest, northward, toward the Montmédy–Mézières railway. The precise character of these raids provoked, however, some discussion. Only the support of divisional artillery could be expected, as the Corps had no guns available for this purpose; question was raised as to whether the raiding parties should go prepared for a stay in the occupied enemy positions, or should simply undertake to make prisoners and withdraw at once. But the spirit of the Army order was taken by the American Division as requiring a real penetration of at least the enemy outpost line and its occupation during the day; the withdrawal was not to be made until the onfall of darkness. It was in this literal, thoroughgoing manner that the Army order was taken as applying, at any rate, to the Twenty-Sixth. The French appear to have believed that less weighty demonstrations would answer the purpose; they chose objectives and made arrangements, with the Corps' approval, which involved no great expenditure of forces. But because the possible points of attack opposite the Twenty-Sixth happened all to be naturally strong and strongly held, and because there was every desire on the part of the Division Commander to carry out to the letter what was conceived to be the real purpose of the demonstrations, the Division was committed from the outset to a considerable undertaking.

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[1] G.O. No. 20, Headquarters First American Army, September 20, 1918.

An attack was to be made on Riaville, Marcheville, and the trench system (Haudinot Trench) connecting them. The troops detailed for the attack were formed in two groups, one of which, directed against Riaville (Group II) included:

1 Battalion, 103d Infantry
Machine-Gun Co., 103d Infantry
Stokes Mortar Platoon, 103d Infantry
37-mm. Platoon, 103d Infantry
One half Company B, 101st Engineers
Detachment 101st Field Signal Battalion
Detachment 101st Sanitary Train

The other column (Group I), directed against Marcheville, was composed of:

1 Battalion, 102d Infantry
Cos. A, B, 102d Machine-Gun Battalion
Stokes Mortar Platoon, 102d Infantry
37-mm. Platoon, 102d Infantry
One half Company F, 101st Engineers
Detachment 101st Field Signal Battalion
Detachment 101st Sanitary Train

The whole force was placed under the command of Colonel H. I. Bearss, 102d Infantry. The general plan contemplated the capture of the towns and establishment of a defensive line on the far side of them, their occupation throughout the day, and withdrawal during the night of the 26th–27th. To support the attack batteries of the 51st Field Artillery Brigade were brought down into the plain at the foot of the Meuse Heights. The full details of the plan could not be given to all subordinate commanders in advance of the affair; and a further initial difficulty was presented by the fact that the battalion of the 102d Infantry selected for the attack had never occupied the forward positions, and was therefore (and owing to lack of reconnaissance) unfamiliar with the terrain.

Artillery preparation began at 11.30 o'clock on the night of September 25, and continued until the infantry advanced at 5.30 o'clock on the 26th, Group I starting from Hill 230, northwest of Wadonville, Group II from a position southeast of Fresnes. The command post of the party's commander was directed to be in Saulx; but with characteristic impetuousness Colonel Bearss advanced with the first waves of the attack, taking with him a small connection patrol and the information officers from Brigade and Division Headquarters.

A very heavy daybreak fog gave cover to the raiders; but this, with the addition of a heavy smoke screen and the haze of the shell bursts of the barrage, made it easy for units to lose direction, and in several instances for men to come right up on a German machine gun before either side was aware of the other's proximity. A severe enemy artillery concentration, dropped on the columns just as they were forming up for the approach across the plain, had momentarily disordered the assembly; machine guns, hidden in a small grove of trees south and west of Marcheville, slowed up the advance considerably; but before eleven o'clock the 102d's battalion had entered Marcheville, stopped the sniping and machine-gun fire by plucky hand-to-hand fighting, and took up a position as directed on the east side. The 103d, meanwhile, had been having great difficulty in progressing toward Riaville; elements which gained the edge of the town were driven back, so that this wing of the attack was stopped short early in the day. The French, on right and left, had simply advanced, made prisoners, and retired, completing their activity by noon, with the result that the Marcheville force was left with its flanks in the air and exposed to the fire of all the German artillery in the neighborhood.

Up to noon, however, there had been only slight artillery reaction; but shortly after the advanced line was established a German aviator flew twice over Marcheville, less than a hundred meters up. And within five minutes after he had made his observation an enemy concentration of great violence opened on the town which was continued with only brief intervals throughout the day. Marcheville, Saulx, and the communicating trenches were all "plastered" with perfect accuracy, severity, and intensity. Shells landing squarely in the advanced trenches caused many casualties and forced a withdrawal of the holding force (reduced to about 200 effectives) to the shelter of a stone wall and a shallow trench near the château on the southern edge of the village; at one o'clock in the afternoon, under cover of this bombardment, a large force of enemy infantry reëntered Marcheville without difficulty from the direction of Saint-Hilaire; the party with Colonel Bearss had to fight its way out to join the troops in the château grounds. For some hours, as three other German counter-attacks developed, there was heavy infantry fighting in and about the town, a support company having been brought in to assist. Some prisoners were made; but no attempt was made to reoccupy the advanced positions, the battalion being fully engaged in clearing the streets of the town itself of the counter-attacking forces. It was a murderous kind of day. The enemy artillery played havoc with the lines of communication, whether wire or runner relays, the former being destroyed beyond repair and the runners undergoing so many casualties that the delivery of orders or information was delayed for hours. The heavy fog and haze which obscured the field all day made it very difficult for the watchers on the heights to follow the course of events; for the same reason (poor visibility) the artillery was hampered in its support of the raiding parties, while the latter, practically isolated throughout the long afternoon, could do little but cling to their initial successes under heavy German shelling.

At 7.30 in the evening the order to retire was sent out to Marcheville from the Division's advanced command post above Hannonville. All the wounded, save a few cut off by the German counter-attack, were evacuated; and the retirement began at 9.45 o'clock in perfect order, by platoons, under cover of machine guns and infantry detachments stationed midway between Marcheville and Saulx. There was no interference with the withdrawal save artillery fire, and the movement was completed before midnight.

Losses were severe considering the character of the engagement. But the main object of the raid was accomplished. To the enemy the attack appeared the beginning of an operation of consequence, following as it did the active raiding of the days preceding; and so thoroughly persuaded was he of the importance of the Marcheville–Riaville demonstration that he had strongly reinforced the garrison and strengthened the position. Since both troops and the attention of the German High Command were drawn away from the Argonne front partly by its means, the raid, considered as a diversion, was properly called a complete success, bought at however large a cost of killed and wounded.

The German official documents of the period throw considerable light on the success of the demonstrations of September 26 east of the Meuse, which were no more than the climax of previous activities all directed to the one general end of deceiving the enemy. The following captured order is characteristic:

> West Group Center, September 25, 1918. *Group Order.* (Extracts of the Division Order Ia No. 125/9 of September 22, 1918.) It is certain that the Franco-Americans will attack east of the Meuse on a large scale. Whether the attack will be extended to the left river bank is not yet clear. The situation requires the greatest watchfulness. Under no circumstances should the enemy be able to surprise us. (Signed) VOLETCHY

What opinion the Corps Commander entertained regarding the value of the day's work of troops of the Division is set forth in his letter to the American Commander-in-Chief:

No. 29329. *Headquarters, Second Colonial Corps Staff*
October 5, 1918

From: General Blondlat, Commanding Second Colonial Corps.
To: The Commander-in-Chief (through channels, General commanding Second Army).
Subject: Proposition for Citation in Army Orders in favor of the 1st Battalion, 102d Regiment of Infantry, U.S.

I have the honor to send you the report which I had the General commanding the Twenty-Sixth United States Division make on the very hard and glorious combat in which this division engaged on September 26, 1918.

The Second Colonial Corps had received orders to carry out extensive raids to attract and fix the attention of the enemy as follows: "General Orders No. 20, September 20, 1918, of the General commanding the First United States Army. The Second Colonial Corps will hold the front of Bois le Chauffour, inclusive, to Mesnil, exclusive. The Second Colonial Corps will make a demonstration along its front, launching artillery bombardment as well as making extensive raids at H hour."

The dimenson and duration of the raid executed by the Twenty-Sixth United States Division certainly deceived the enemy as to our intentions; the losses suffered by the troops taking part in this operation were fairly severe but there is no doubt that those suffered by the Germans were much more serious.

The spirit of sacrifice and magnificent courage displayed by the troops of the Twenty-Sixth United States Division on this occasion were certainly not in vain. They seem to me worthy of recompense and praise. Therefore I directed the General commanding the division to address propositions to me on this subject.

I urgently request that the 1st Battalion of the 102d Infantry be cited in Army Orders on the following grounds:

Picked troops who, trained by Colonel Hiram I. Bearss, who led the attack in the first line, carried out brilliantly and with splendid energy a particularly delicate operation; engaged battle with a superb dash; won a victory after a violent combat over an enemy who was both stubborn and superior in numbers, entrenched in concrete shelters, strongly supported by numerous machine guns and powerful artillery, and who made use of, in the course of the action, infamous methods of warfare; heroically carried out their mission in capturing in heavy fighting a village where they maintained themselves all day in spite of four enemy counter-attacks, and thus furnished the finest example of courage, abnegation and self-sacrifice.

I request further that the officers and men mentioned in General Edwards' report receive each and severally the rewards suggested for them by name.

Blondlat

And that the American High Command most fully concurred in the foregoing high estimate was evidenced by the number of decorations awarded to the participants in the raid, including a citation of the whole Marcheville infantry battalion, as will be told in its place. The

Marcheville–Riaville episode was of minor importance when measured on the larger scale by which battles are differentiated from combats and engagements. But there was a certain intensity, a difficulty, a deadliness about that day's encounter out on the Woevre Plain, far in advance of the general line, which gives this two-battalion raid a considerable relief. Certainly, in the records of the participating regiments, the day looms large, and the day's work of the supporting artillery was heartbreaking. The intensity and long duration of its fire was a revelation to the Corps authorities; the whole affair gave the French a new assurance of the deadly earnestness and hard-hitting ability of their new allies; not that by this date any such assurance was needed.

For a few days following the sector was relatively quiet. Considerable gas was delivered on the Division's forward area and outpost zone, so much that even the horses were affected on the lines back in the woods along the Grande Tranchée. October 2 a raid by a detachment of the 101st Infantry was made on Warville Wood and Hauts Epines Wood, in conjunction with the French. The latter, however, missing the appointed place of rendezvous, did not actively participate with the Americans, who, by nice maneuvering, entered the enemy positions by surprise and returned with forty-nine prisoners. At Division Headquarters, which, directly after the Saint-Mihiel affair, had been moved back from Rupt by Corps' order to the village of Troyon, on the Verdun–Saint-Mihiel highway, there was much speculation as to the Division's next duty. For one felt sure it would be actively employed somewhere in the great Argonne offensive then in progress. For the present, however, one could only wait, bending much energy on making the troops as comfortable as possible in view of the continuous bad weather. In accordance with the Corps' instructions, for instance, those battalions most in need of rest were drawn back from the forward zone to places where better shelter could be secured; a withdrawal was also made of troops in the Woevre Plain, except a chain of outposts, on October 2, for the purpose of leaving a barrage zone one thousand meters wide in front of the zone of principal resistance on the heights above Herbeuville, Hannonville, and Thillot-sous-les-Côtes.

A good many changes of command were effected during the stay in the Troyon Sector. Colonel P. D. Glassford, promoted to be Brigadier-General, took command of the 51st Field Artillery Brigade, Colonel Farr remaining attached in an advisory capacity, while Colonel J. A. Twachtman (formerly Major, 103d Field Artillery) was assigned to command that regiment. In the Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel W. S. Bowen was succeeded as G–3 by Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Dowell; the command of the 104th Infantry passed from Colonel G. McCaskey to Colonel B. F. Cheatham; Colonel J. A. Mack was assigned to lead the 102d Field Artillery. Other changes included the appointment of Major F. B. La Crosse to the 101st Field Signal Battalion (October 1), Major H. L. Bowen to the 103d Machine-Gun Battalion (October 18), Major William Denton to the 101st Sanitary Train (October 1), Captain W. L. Morrison to Headquarters Troop (September 28), Major Henry Wheelock to the 101st Supply Train (replacing Major T. C. Baker, who went to the First Army). In the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion Captain J. R. Sanborn succeeded Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) J. D. Murphy, who went to Division Headquarters to become presently the Divisional Machine-Gun Officer.

For a few days' interval, though the Division remained in the sector, there was a lull. But the air was heavy with expectation as to what new scene was being made ready once the curtain came down on the Rupt and Troyon Sectors, where the Twenty-Sixth had been continuously employed since the first days of September.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE MEUSE–ARGONNE OFFENSIVE — VERDUN

THE general situation, as the Division came to the line again, this time on the sinister and glorious hills before Verdun, can be readily summarized. West of the Meuse the First American Army was facing north, directing itself toward the vital German line of communications and principal line of retreat — the Montmédy-Mézières railway. The French Seventeenth Corps, meanwhile, forming the extreme right of the First American Army, was disposed on the east side of the Meuse in a segment of a circle, north and northeast of Verdun, on lines traced on the identical scene of the struggle of February, 1916. Its mission was to protect the flank of the main American advance in its earlier stages. To divert as many German forces as possible; to win such local successes as would facilitate the general advance, and might result in compelling the enemy to yield his all-important flanking positions on the edge of the high ground, where this northern end of the Meuse Heights breaks down to the plains; to prevent any counterattack in flank; to launch limited attacks which would wear the enemy down — such, briefly, were the tasks which the Seventeenth Corps was called on to fulfill during the latter part of October and early November, as part of the general plan. And in all these tasks the Twenty-Sixth had its full share of responsibility and achievement.

We have reviewed the work which the Division performed on the first day of the Meuse–Argonne offensive — how, on September 26, it directed against the enemy lines at Riaville–Marcheville one of the local demonstrations which blinded the German High Command as to the actual point of the main Meuse–Argonne attack. There remains now to trace its tour of duty on the awful Verdun front, where, for twenty-six consecutive days and nights, the New Englanders battled to loosen the enemy's hold on one of the most vital positions on the whole western line. One dislikes superlatives; but one may be permitted to believe that no harder tasks were assigned to any unit of the Expeditionary Force than the missions of the Twenty-Sixth between October 18 and November 11; and this opinion is ventured with a clear appreciation of what Cantigny, the Sergy Plateau, Fismes, Montfaucon, and the Belleau or Argonne thickets meant to the friends and brothers of the Twenty-Sixth in other American divisions. Of the importance of the Verdun *charnière* as a pivotal point of the enemy defenses, let the Germans themselves testify:

Vth Army Staff
Ia No. 10619 *Secret* *Army Headquarters, Oct.* 1, 1918

According to information in our possession, the enemy is about to attack the Vth Army east of the Meuse and try to push toward Longuyon. The object of this attack is to cut the Longuyon–Sedan line, the most important artery of the Army of the West. Moreover, the enemy's intention is to render it impossible for us to exploit the Briey Basin, on which depends in large part our steel production. Thus the heaviest part of the task will once more fall on the Vth Army in the course of the combats in the coming weeks, and the safety of the Fatherland will be in its hands. It is on the unconquerable resistance of the Verdun front that depends the fate of a great part of the west front, perhaps even of our nation. The Fatherland must rest assured that every commander and every man realizes the greatness of his mission and that he will do his duty to the very end. If we do this the enemy's attack will, as heretofore, break against our firm will to hold.

The Commander-in-Chief
VON DER MARWITZ
General of Cavalry and Adjutant-General

A holy place to France, as Ypres will always be for England, the gray, melancholy, haunted hills that hedge

Verdun on the north have been described so often as to require no detailed picture in these pages. A land of death; a mourning land, blasted by so many storms of fire that all vestige of human occupation had long since disappeared; a land once bowered in forests, where now the soil had been churned to knee-deep miry clay, whence even every stump and leaf had been blasted — one can record only impressions, only the weight that pressed on the troops who were called to enter that graveyard. The men were calloused by long experience of war; but they were sobered, indeed, as the witch-spells of Verdun laid hold of them. Imaginations were touched by a knowledge of the heroism and glory, which at Douaumont, Vaux, Mort Homme, Crow's Wood, Pepper Hill, or Haumont had splendidly flamed into flower. To feel that one was in the trench lines, made for all time historic by the legionaries of Pétain and Nivelle, was to feel a quickening glow of sober exultation none can forget. But coloring all other emotion was horror of the place — not hatred, not loathing, but the grip of a curious awe which clutched the heart.

Let us look somewhat carefully at the actual situation on this front. It may be possible to make clear some matters which have not appeared in all the records, official or otherwise, of certain important phases of the so-called Meuse–Argonne offensive.

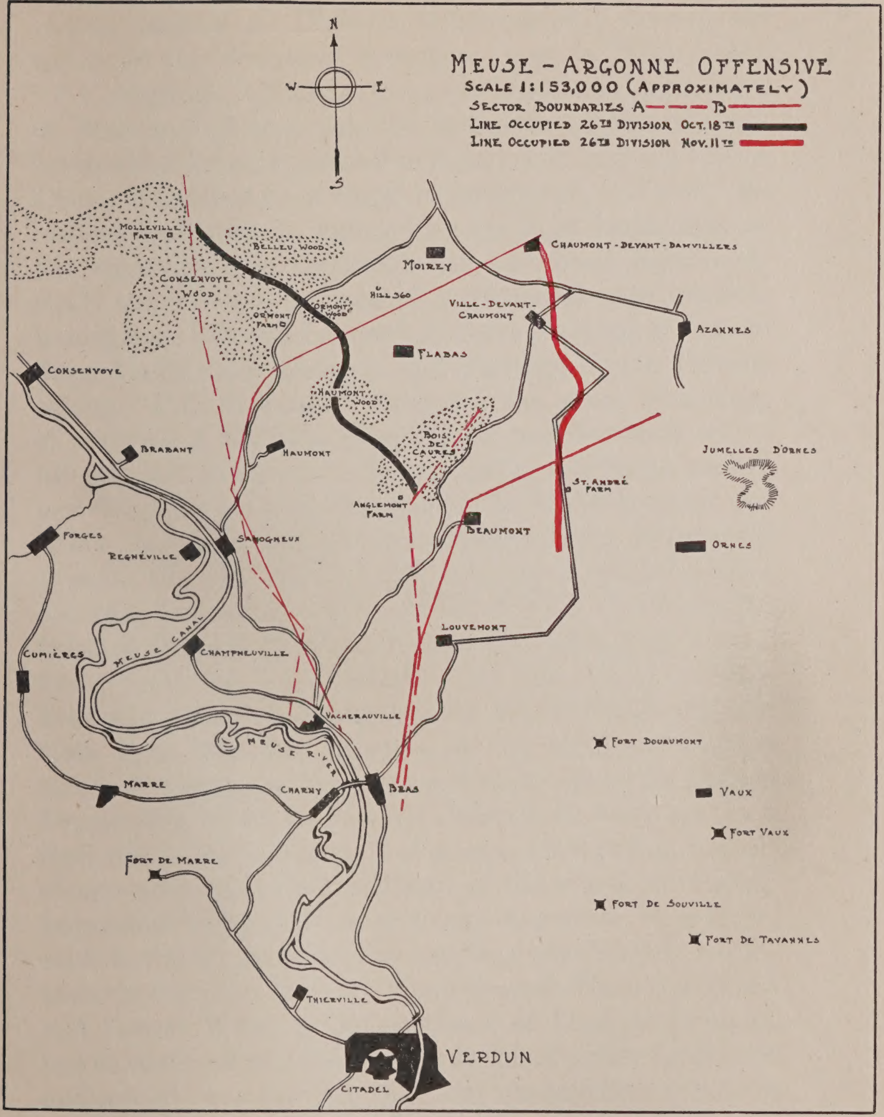
By October 8 the Division, relieved by elements of the Second Dismounted Cavalry and Seventy-Ninth (American) Divisions, had been withdrawn from the Troyon Sector. Designated for the moment as part of the army reserve, it was concentrated in camps and billets in and southwest of Verdun where Headquarters was opened, in the citadel, on October 10. Presently the engineers and artillery rejoined; and reconnaissances were made by all commanding officers of the terrain north of the city, occupied by elements of the Seventeenth Corps. The Corps order of battle, from left to right at this time, included the

Thirty-Third Division; Twenty-Ninth Division (one brigade, the 58th); Eighteenth French Division; while on the extreme right lay the Twenty-Sixth French Division. Opposite the Corps were German-Austrian divisions as follows: 28th (rated first class and just brought in); 1st Austro-Hungarian (first class); 15th (one regiment in line, two in reserve); 33d (first class); 32d (third class). Organized in depth, in three zones of defense, with powerful artillery and machine-gun resources and admirable air service, the enemy was opposing to all attacks a most obstinate resistance, quite in accordance with the army commander's exhortations. Attacks by the Seventeenth Corps with the slender forces available had resulted in only limited successes, as was exemplified by the somewhat extensive engagement of October 13. Orders from First Army Headquarters directed the kind of combat in which the Corps must engage in view of its prescribed mission. The results of that policy were already making themselves felt; the views of the Corps Commander as to a change of policy which would assure better results will be interesting to record in the proper place.

For the moment the Corps was pursuing the traditional Verdun method of feeding into the line not whole divisions at a time, but only brigades or regiments, to effect the relief of exhausted units. Thus (as had already happened with the Thirty-Third and Twenty-Ninth Divisions), it was a brigade of the Twenty-Sixth (the 52d) which first entered the line on this historic ground, attached to the Seventeenth Corps under General Claudel. October 11 the 104th Infantry relieved the 114th Infantry (Twenty-Ninth Division) in the vicinity of Côte d'Oie (Goose Hill) on the west side of the Meuse; October 13 the regiment became Corps reserve, going to the Brabant–Samogneux area. On the same date the 103d Infantry moved to Côte d'Oie, while Brigade Headquarters was established in the rubbish pile which once had been the village of Cumières.

The line occupied by the Corps at the time extended from a point south of Sivry, on the river, easterly to Molleville Farm Wood, thence southeasterly to include parts of Haumont Wood and Caures Wood. It was a place where, as had been said, a meter of ground gained was the equivalent of a kilometer gained elsewhere. On the tops of the gray, bare hills the enemy had observation posts; in the confusing ravines and wrecks of woodland he had a chain of machine-gun nests and intricate trench lines, perfected after months of work. In rear of the hills, hidden in a score of glens and hollows secure from observation, a large artillery served him well.

On October 16, before the Eighteenth French Division was entirely relieved, troops of the Twenty-Sixth were told off for an attack which was intended to complete the capture of Haumont Wood. Approximately a battalion of the 104th Infantry went in — Companies A, D, E, with one platoon from each of Companies G and H. Through a heavy rain, the composite force marched, in the night of October 15/16, some twenty kilometers, and deployed at dawn over unfamiliar ground, which was deep in mire, for the attack in which the troops were to receive the support of sixteen French tanks. But they could not make good their advance. Receiving no assistance from the tanks, which, quickly bogged in the mire, were abandoned by their crews, the infantry made no progress against the enemy's machine-gun defense. Under cover of a well-sustained barrage, here and there a section or a combat group got forward over the chaos of shell craters, wire, and mud; but their efforts, however marked by feats of personal pluck, were all in vain. Only some losses, which could be ill afforded, remained to show for this particular attack against a single point in the enemy's lines. Again was demonstrated the futility of the attempts to which the Corps was committed — of which nobody was more keenly aware than General Claudel.



MEUSE - ARGONNE OFFENSIVE

On October 18 the Division Commander and the advanced echelon of Division Headquarters[1] were established at the advanced command post in Bras, called "P.C. Neptune." Here, between what had been the villages of Bras and Charny (on the west side of the Meuse), bridges had formerly existed over the river and the Meuse Canal, connected by a single embankment; and now, the bridges destroyed or replaced by the light footbridges of the engineers, the embankments had been ingeniously made to serve the purpose of a command post, dugouts having been burrowed under it beneath a canopy of camouflage. Under daily shell-fire, and affording a most illusory safety, "P.C. Neptune" possessed the great advantage of bringing a Division Commander well forward, where his personal touch could be constantly exerted to control and direct his men. By October 19 the Division was in position, having completed the relief of the Eighteenth French. The 51st Infantry Brigade was on the left of the line this time, in the Bois de Chênes (Oak Wood) and in front of Ormont Wood, Headquarters being near a road fork, north of Vacherauville,[2] on the Vacherauville–Samogneux road which followed the Meuse Canal northerly from Bras. The 52d Brigade, on the right, occupied a tangle of trenches to the north and northeast of the famous Pepper Hill (Côte de Poivre). Difficult to designate, in a land where the ordinary local geographical points had all disappeared, the exact positions of the troops are nearly impossible to identify in ordinary narrative. It may be said, however, that the line ran in a general way southeasterly from the Brabant Wood through Haumont Wood and Caures Wood to the northeast of Anglemont Farm, but so confused was the terrain, so full of minor reëntrants and salients was the line, that only approximate locations can here be given. The artillery, after a rest of two days

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[1] Chief of Staff, Assistant Chiefs of Staff G-2, G-3, Machine-Gun Officer, Signal Officer, Message Center.

[2] Maison des Côtelettes.

(October 12–13), completed the relief of the French gunners on October 16. The rear echelon of Division Headquarters, with the railhead, remained at Verdun; Corps Headquarters was at Regret, just to the southwest of the city on the Bar-le-Duc road. In Vacherauville, a mile above Bras, was the Headquarters of the Twenty-Ninth Division, which prolonged the line of the Twenty-Sixth to the left.

It was at this time — to leave for a moment the narrative for the Division's field activities — that the Yankees adopted the divisional insignia which, worn on the left shoulder of every officer and man, was to take on, in their feeling for it, the characteristics of a badge of honor. General Headquarters had prescribed these personal insignia for army troops, corps troops, and all divisions, the Twenty-Sixth receiving the following communication:

H.A.E.F., October 20, 1918

Commanding General,
26th Division

N. M–674. Each division will adopt and procure immediately some distinctive cloth design which will be worn by every officer and man of the division on the left arm, the upper part to be attached to the shoulder seam. Report will be made to these Headquarters by telegram as to designs adopted in order that there may be no duplication. Approval of design will be made by telegram from these Headquarters.

Davis

In conformity, therefore, with these directions, a design consisting of a YD monogram in blue cloth, of the color of the French army uniform, on a diamond of olive drab, was submitted for approval on October 23. The color of the letters was later changed to dark blue, and, thus modified, the design was authorized, and its wearing made compulsory after November 29, in orders from Headquarters First Army.[1]

Reverting now to operations, with the Division in position, it is appropriate to take account of the happenings of the moment which colored the situation so far as the Twenty-Sixth was concerned. The health of the command at this time was seriously impaired by the influenza epidemic which overran all Europe. Daily the men evacuated for sickness reached large numbers, so that the effective strength of the units was seriously impaired. On October 14 Brigadier-General Shelton was forced to relinquish command of the 51st Infantry Brigade, through illness, at a time when his presence could hardly be spared. About the same date Captain Nathaniel Simpkins, one of the Division Commander's most valued personal aides, was also stricken to die on the 22d in the hospital at Souilly. From every regiment, battalion and company officers dropped out who were absolutely indispensable. The disease was aided by very bad weather conditions — continual rain, cold autumn river mists, and also by the appalling state of the ground where the troops were forced to live and seek shelter. Flooded dugouts, hillsides which were merely quagmires, broken roads, great difficulty in providing or procuring sufficient hot food, continually wet clothes and blankets, all tended to sap the strength of the battalions posted in the gas-drenched hollows or on slopes which were whipped at all hours by snipers and artillery.

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[1] G.O. No. 33, Headquarters First Army, November 9, 1918.

It was at this time, moreover, that there fell on the Division a blow which, for the moment, stunned it. From General Headquarters, on October 22, an order came relieving General Edwards of command. The man who had organized and trained the Division; the leader who had won the affection of every officer and man by his daily solicitude for their wants; who had been followed with confidence through months of service on the firing-line and battle-field; who was needed by his Division now as never before, on the eve of an engagement, was caught up by the machinery regulating the return of officers to the United

States, and was ordered home, like any captain or lieutenant, to assist in the training of new levies.

The separation of General Edwards from his command, under the circumstances, appeared to many as the culminating incident in a long campaign. Hotly defended by his friends in America, the original leader of the Twenty-Sixth became the storm center of one of the first attacks against the methods of some of the notable figures at American Headquarters. It is true that there came with the order relieving him from command a personal letter from the Chief of Staff of the Expeditionary Force, assuring General Edwards that he was not to take the order as in any sense reflecting upon his ability or reputation; that he was to be given a commensurate command at home in charge of a training area; that his return to the United States was merely in line with the general policy by which experienced officers of all grades were being sent home as instructors. One may accept all that as accurately expressing the sentiments of those high in authority; one may dismiss the personal controversy as briefly as possible, on the ground that the rights or wrongs of any individual were unimportant in a drama as vast as that enacted by the American Expeditionary Force. But the Division Commander's relief on October 22 possessed a wider implication. One has to consider the effect upon his officers and men, of General Edwards's abrupt relief.

Comment has already been made on the difficulties caused in batteries and battalions by taking away experienced officers as instructors, often on the eve of an action. Inevitable under the conditions the continuous drain did, however, take from units officers whose loss could be ill afforded. And now, as a platoon or company had been shorn of its strength at critical moments, so did the whole Division suffer. Not fifty men, but fifteen thousand men, felt the shock of the loss; and the blow descended, as has been pointed out, at a moment when the troops needed every possible encouragement and support if they were to accomplish in the best manner the tasks which were in store. One felt that full knowledge of conditions obtaining at the moment would have made impossible the issuance of an order which deprived a combat division, engaged with the enemy, of one of its principal reliances. Once more one witnessed the apparent blindness of those who, conducting the game of war, neglect to consider the psychology of the pawns on the chessboard.

Relieved on October 22 the Division Commander was allowed to retain command until his successor should report for duty. And this concession was at least something gained, because a Corps operation was in preparation for October 23 which required the active participation of the Twenty-Sixth.

Opposite the left of the Division's line a wooded ridge extended from northwest to southeast, the possession of which would exploit a success already won by the Twenty-Ninth Division on its front. Could this Division enlarge its gains to its right, supported by an advance of the Twenty-Sixth's left, commanding ground would be won from the enemy, who would be deprived of an observation point and of a position which was important in his general defensive scheme, on the ridge northeast of Molleville Farm covered by Houppy Wood, Molleville Wood, and Belleu Wood. To accomplish this purpose the Twenty-Ninth Division arranged to attack with two battalions, in a direction due east, while two battalions of the Twenty-Sixth launched a convergent attack in a northeasterly direction [1] with the support of machine guns and the usual infantry utilities. This operation, which came to be known in the Division as the "Battle of H in Houppy," because of a somewhat unusual map reference in the original Field Order, was the first of a series in which the 51st Infantry Brigade was engaged without intermission until October

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[1] Field Order No. 92, Headquarters 26th Division.

27. A series of futile assaults gallantly delivered against positions of great strength, these operations may best be treated as constituting a single affair; for the costly attacks on the redoubtable Hill 360 and Ormont Wood, which closed the operation, were rendered imperative by the preliminary work of October 23 against Belleu Wood on the Etrayes Ridge.

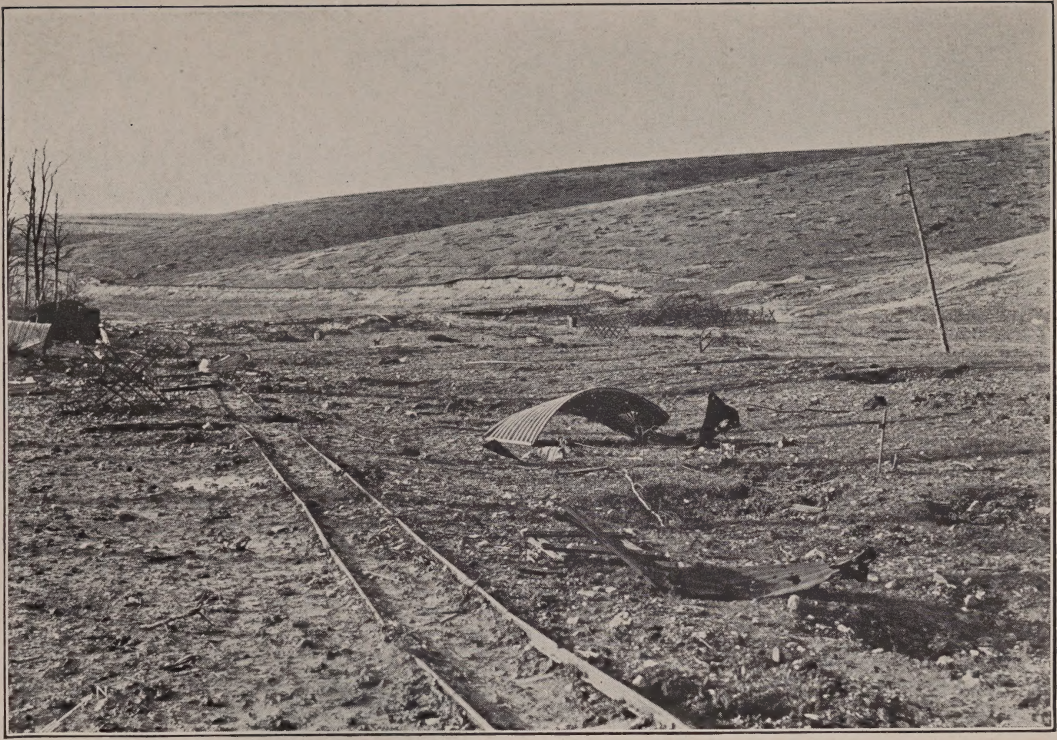
The brigade order for this attack most vividly explains the situation. Even amid the unfamiliar names and figures which represent only the coördinates of points on a staff map, one may sense what was being required, one may visualize the high, frowning ridges, seamed and scarred and blasted, see the ragged woods with their nests of machine guns, *minenwerfers*, and heavy wire, realize the difficulty of an advance over a country of steep slopes, confusing ravines, and deep mud, in the face of a determined resistance by troops told off to hold these woods and ridges to the end. In the following order of Colonel H. I. Bearss (commanding the 51st Brigade while General Shelton was ill), one reads in the last paragraph an appeal to troops who had been told that this was to be their last battle under the eye of General Edwards:

Headquarters 51st *Infantry Brigade*
26*th Division, American E.F.*
France, Oct. 21, 1918

Field Orders
No. 25.
Maps: Samogneux } 1/10,000.
Verdun–4 }
Verdun–B } 1/20,000.
Bradeville }

1. The 51st Infantry Brigade attacks in conjunction with the 29th Division on its left on D day at H hour. The object of the attack by this brigade is to obtain possession of the Houppy Bois, that portion of Molleville Bois now held by the enemy, and Hill 346 as far as Bois Belleu exclusive.

2. *General Plan of Attack.* The 51st Infantry Brigade attacks from the Ravine de Molleville in a general northeasterly direc-



HILL SOUTH OF ORMONT WOOD

tion while the 29th Division attacks in an easterly direction along the ridge 375–361.

3. *Plan of Attack of the 51st Infantry Brigade.* The attack of the 51st Inf. Brigade consists of a converging movement from a line between 25.5–81.6 to 25.5–81.84 in the Ravine de Molleville to gain possession of the ridge limited by the Côtes 361–346 (both exclusive). See sketch attached to F.O. No. 92, 26th Division.

4. *Objectives of Attack.* The attack will be divided into two phases. The attack of the intermediate objective marked by a general line on the eastern edges of Houppy Bois as far as 27.31–81.45, thence a line running southwesterly to 27.22–81.00. A halt of one hour will be made on this line to reform organizations. The attack, from this objective to the normal objective between Pilon d'Etrayes, inclusive (Côte 361) and Bois Belieu exclusive, will then be resumed.

When the normal objective has been reached, preparations will be made immediately for seizing Belieu Bois. This will be accomplished at H plus 5 hours 15 minutes by the reserve battalion which will pass through the right attacking battalion on the normal objective.

5. *The Means to be employed by the 51st Infantry Brigade*

(*a*) Colonel H. I. Bearss, Commanding 51st Infantry Brigade
  101st Infantry, Colonel E. L. Logan, Commanding
  101st and 102d Machine-Gun Battalions and M.G. Co., 101st Infantry
  37-mm. platoon, 102d Infantry
    Stokes Mortar platoon, 102d Infantry
    Company F, 1st Gas Regiment, Capt. Feeley, Commanding
    Detachment 101st Field Signal Battalion
    Detachment 101st Sanitary Train
  281st Aero Squadron
  Balloon No. 25
(*b*) 51st Field Artillery Brigade

6. *Plan for use of Attacking Troops*

(*a*) Infantry

The infantry attack will consist of a converging attack by the two battalions as indicated in the sketch attached to F.O. No. 92, 26th Division. The 29th Division will withdraw at H minus 1 hour, 45 minutes from the line now held to a north and south line running through Molleville Farm at 25.5–81.7.

The 1st Battalion, 101st Infantry, will form for the attack on this line at Molleville Farm facing east at H minus one hour and will attack the enemy at H hour in conjunction with the 29th Division on its left. It will advance in an easterly direction until reaching the intermediate objective.

When the 1st Battalion, 101st Infantry, has reached the nose north of letter H in Houppy Bois at 26.63–81.59, the 3d Battalion, 101st Infantry, will pivot on its right flank from its position in Molleville Bois, and the two battalions will continue the attack to the intermediate objective. C.O. 3d Battalion, 101st Infantry, is responsible for the prompt execution of this movement and it must be executed so that no delay will be caused to the 1st Battalion. The liaison combat group from its position at 26.35–81.10 is responsible for the closest liaison between the two battalions which must be maintained at all times.

Battalions will be formed in depth with two companies in the firing line and two in support. One 37 mm. platoon, one Stokes Mortar platoon, one machine-gun company and one section Gas and Flame troops will be attached to each battalion.

The attention of all regimental, battalion, company, platoon and squad leaders is called to Instructions No. 106, 26th Division. Particular attention will be paid to paragraphs 1 and 2. Each man will be equipped with two bandoliers of ammunition in addition to that carried in the cartridge belt. This operation, which is carried out largely through woods, requires every effort to keep the command well in hand and can best be accomplished by the use of small columns.

Rate of advance of Infantry. 100 meters in 10 minutes. The 1st Bn., 101st Infantry, leaves the parallel of departure at H hour. The 3d Bn., 101st Infantry, leaves its parallel of departure when the 1st Bn. has reached the nose of Houppy Bois as outlined above. Intermediate objective reached at H plus two hours, 30 minutes. Departure from intermediate objective at H plus 3 hours, 30 minutes. The normal objective reached at H plus 4 hours, 30 minutes. Attack of the zone of eventual exploitation at H plus 5 hours, 15 minutes.

7. *Plan of Liaison.* Telephone, radio, T.P.S., pigeons and runners will be employed.

(*a*) The 1st Bn., 101st Infantry, upon reaching the nose in the Houppy Bois will fire one yellow rocket. Upon reaching its intermediate objective it will fire two yellow rockets, in addition to displaying their panels. The 3d Bn., 101st Infantry, upon reaching the intermediate objective, will fire one caterpillar rocket.

Upon reaching the normal objective, each battalion will fire two caterpillar rockets in quick succession. The 2d Bn., 101st Infantry, upon completing the exploitation of Belieu Bois will fire one yellow rocket and one caterpillar rocket in quick succession.

8. *Axis of Liaison:* Bras, Worms, Haumont, 26.3–80.4.

Regimental Commanders are responsible that telephones from the head of the Axis of Liaison, 26.3–80.4, are run forward to the Battalion Commanders at least one hour before H hour and they will be responsible that telephone communication between them and their battalion commanders is maintained throughout the action.

9. *Synchronization of Watches.* Watches will be synchronized by the Division Signal Officer.

(*a*) Regimental Commanders will arrange for the prompt establishment of a regimental ammunition dump and will fill it promptly.

(*b*) The necessary arrangements will be made for the pioneers to go forward on the night following the attack and to string wire in front of our positions.

(*c*) Evacuation of wounded will be according to Division plans.

(*d*) Organization commanders will take the necessary steps to insure a constant supply of pyrotechnics and ammunition to the assaulting troops.

10. Every officer, non-commissioned officer and man of this brigade is depended upon to uphold the glorious traditions of the 26th Division. Hell with all its flying artillery can't stop this brigade when once engaged in action.

11. *Posts of Command.*

Division P.C.	No change
51st F.A. Brigade P.C.	No change
51st Inf. Brigade P.C.	After 17.00 o'clock Oct. 21st —26.5–79.7

By order of Colonel BEARSS, U.S.M.C.
JUDSON HANNIGAN, *Captain*
Acting Adjutant

The result of the day's effort from the military point of view is summarized in the report prepared at the time by an officer of the Staff. Here again it is not difficult to sense the meaning of those hours of struggle in the woods and mire, following the first advance from Molleville Farm in the heavy morning mist. Says the report:

> The first day of the present effort to obtain possession of the commanding heights in the easterly part of the region between Bois de Consenvoye and Flabas ended to our advantage. At 19.15 o'clock of October 23 it was announced that the division had reached its normal and exploitation objectives (the latter being the Bois Belleu). The work of consolidating the new positions and rectifying the line was ordered to be begun at once, so as to insure us the possession of the Bois Belleu, Bois des Chênes, and the ground between, while patrols were directed to maintain close contact with the enemy in the Bois d'Ormont.
>
> But the Germans came back strongly and at once. Under the pressure of a heavy counter-attack, supported by an intense flanking artillery fire, the battalion of the 101st Infantry which had gone through Bois Belleu was forced to relinquish its gains, so that morning (October 24) found that part of our newly won ground still in the hands of the enemy, — an enemy who, as was learned from prisoners and deserters, had just been reinforced and partially relieved by fresh troops of the One Hundred and Ninety-Second Division, — a class one organization.
>
> Our attack was, however, promptly renewed. Supported most efficiently by the preparation, encaging, and smoke screen concentrations of the divisional and corps artillery, and by machine gun battalions, the 2d Battalion, 101st Infantry, advanced against Bois Belleu at 15 o'clock, October 24, while the 102d Infantry (less 1st Battalion) attacked a line in which the principal objective was Hill 360, starting at 16.30. Once more a violent resistance was encountered. By the most varied means, ranging from machine-gun nests hidden in trees and the work of skillful snipers to bombardment by minenwerfers regulated by aeroplane observation, the enemy contested every inch of our advance. This was pushed steadily, nevertheless, until darkness made a halt and a new consolidation necessary. We had penetrated Bois Belleu to a depth of 500 meters, and, further to the south, had advanced to the lower slopes of Hill 360.

But the first successes had to be secured. As happened many times in previous engagements, an attacking party would win a position with its advance prepared and supported by heavy artillery concentrations, only to find difficulty in maintaining its ground against counter-attacks of a foe determined to contest possession of the ground to the utmost. So in the case of Belleu Wood.[1] Hardly had the 101st's battalions secured a hold on that bloody patch of bushes and stumps before heavy artillery fire and a series of rushes by German infantry forced them back to the western edge. As the report has it:

> Night brought a new enemy reaction. Against the heavily tried battalion of the 101st no less than four furious counter-attacks were directed in quick succession. Three were resisted successfully, but the fourth pushed our troops back again beyond the western edge of the Bois Belleu, only to have them reform and return to the attack at 2.30 o'clock. This time they succeeded in establishing a line well in advance of their original parallel of departure, while the 3d Battalion, 101st Infantry, moved up and extended the new line westerly. Two companies of the brigade reserve (1st Battalion, 101st Infantry) were sent in to support the 2d, which had suffered considerably.
>
> Once more the 51st Infantry Brigade went forward, in an attempt to consolidate its first gains. At 11.30 o'clock on October 25th, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 102d Infantry, after a violent artillery preparation, moved out to the capture of Hill 360, which adjoined the Belleu Wood ridge on the southeast. But hardly had the infantry started, their intentions and objective having been made quite plain to the enemy from the direction and character of the artillery fire, before the enemy clamped down a really awful storm of gas and high explosive under which the assaulting waves simply melted away. The meager hold which had been secured on the lower slopes of the formidable Hill 360 had to be abandoned, and the shattered battalions reeled back to their lines, spent and exhausted, though a few separated sections clung to their gains throughout the night. Noon of the 26th found our lines no further advanced than they were on the afternoon of October 23d. The German defense, most skillfully compounded of machine-gun and artillery fire, admirably directed by aeroplanes, had proved for the moment impregnable.

Interesting comments on the character of the tasks which the Division was called on to perform at this time are contained in the two letters following. The first, sent by the

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[1] Spelled Belieu Wood on some maps.

Brigade Commander, Shelton, who returned to duty October 24, tells the story of those attacks by small units on limited objectives which resulted in failure. They picture the condition and strength of his once fine brigade, now that sickness and the casualties of battle had taken their full toll. The letter reads:

Headquarters 51st Infantry Brigade
26th Division, American E.F.
France, October 27, 1918

From: Commanding General, 51st Infantry Brigade.
To: Commanding General, 26th Division.
Subject: Present situation.

1. Herewith is sketch showing from best information now obtainable the lines held by this brigade and the attached troops, and the dispositions of these troops.

2. This sketch shows Belieu Bois held entirely by the 101st Infantry. The remainder of the line shows practically no advance except by covering patrols from the line as held before the attack started, October 24th. In the center, various parts of the objective were attained at different times, but by such small groups that, lacking at the time available supporting troops, the parts of the objective taken could not be held in the face of the enemy's resistance, artillery, machine guns, grenades. On the right, every attempt to take Hill 360 proved unavailing even with the supporting troops of the 104th Infantry thrown in on the night October 27/28. The resistance here was from machine-gun nests believed to be in concrete emplacements which our artillery fire yesterday failed wholly in destroying. In my judgment these positions cannot be taken except after very heavy and continued destructive artillery preparation by the heaviest calibres.

3. Referring to the Belieu Bois, the information furnished by the 101st Infantry is definite and a sketch furnished shows it wholly in our possession. The efforts of the left of the 102d Infantry, however, to establish liaison by patrols indicates, in the judgment of the officers leading these patrols, that the lines of the 101st Infantry are not as far east as reported. According to the statements of these patrols the eastern line held by the 101st Infantry is approximately along ordinate 28.0 or perhaps even farther to the west. The Commanding Officer, 101st Infantry, is now personally investigating this disagreement on the ground and will report showing lines as found by him as soon as he returns.

4. Directions have been given for the most accurate check on the effective strength that can be made under present conditions and report will be submitted this afternoon in accordance with instructions from the Chief of Staff, 26th Division. The estimated effective strength of battalions according to last and best data is as follows:

101*st Infantry*
1st Battalion — 4 officers, 175 men
2d Battalion — 3 officers, 100 men
3d Battalion — 3 officers, 150 men

102*d Infantry*
1st Battalion — 0 officers, 178 men
2d Battalion — 2 officers, 100 men
3d Battalion — 3 officers, 100 men

The 1st Battalion, 102d Infantry, is commanded by the Regimental Adjutant, the only officer with it. At least two of the officers reported still present are suffering from injuries but are still holding on. It is reported that few non-commissioned officers and particularly sergeants are left. Every effort is being made to collect stragglers and detached elements, and wherever possible these have been thrown into the line, including runners, orderlies, and others on special duty. It is difficult with the shortage of officers to enforce action of any kind now, because through exhaustion the remaining men have in every instance to be aroused by the employment of physical force before they can be made to understand that action is required.

5. The foregoing estimate of effective strength does not include, of course, runners, litter bearers, and some others present with the command but not available for counting with the effective fighting strength. Information is not sufficient to enable me to make an accurate estimate of casualties. The dressing station near this P.C. reports that from noon, October 24th, to this writing, 722 wounded have been received from this brigade. Latest information from the front lines indicates that not all of the wounded have yet been evacuated. Discounting the exaggerations always attending first reports, there is still evidence to indicate that the percentage of killed is probably heavy. Notwithstanding the efforts made by the units engaged themselves and by the military police, comparatively few stragglers have so far been located.

6. The results expected from this attack have not been at-

tained in full and at this writing it is not certain that they have been attained in any considerable degree. But the efforts made by the troops of this brigade for their attainment and the spirit of sacrifice shown seem commendable to me.

Geo. H. Shelton
Brigadier-General, U.S.A.
Commanding

So much for the views of the local troop commander — a man not prone to exaggerated statement. Let us compare his views with those of General Claudel, the Corps Commander, who, on October 22, thought it his duty to set the situation on the Verdun front squarely before the authorities at First Army Headquarters, in the hope of making them realize conditions.

1*st American Army*
17*th Army Corps*
Staff — *Hq.*, 22*d October*, 1918
3*d Bureau*
No. 678 S/3
Secret

General Claudel, Commanding the 17th Army Corps to the Commanding General, 1st American Army.

In reply to your letter of October 21st, relative to the complementary operations to be carried out on the right banks of the Meuse, I have the honor to inform you as follows:

1. *Capture of the line of resistance.*

The operation prescribed in my memorandum 650 S/3 of October 18th, must give us the northern half of the part hachured in brown[1] on the map attached to your memorandum. If this operation succeeds, an operation (*already planned* and studied out by the 26th D.I.U.S.) will be undertaken for the object of giving us complete possession of the Bois d'Ormont.

The part hachured in brown on your map would thus be won in its general line.

I think that at this time the front which has been reached will be coherent enough to be able to be stabilized.

2. *Capture of the line of advanced posts.*

The line to be captured (bistre line on the map) indicates the entire zone of resistance established by the enemy on the reverse slope, and included between the green and bistre lines.

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[1] Reference here and elsewhere is to colored lines on map accompanying memorandum of First American Army of October 21st.

This zone is all the more solid as it is the last organization of the enemy on the Hauts de Meuse and the one which commands the valley of the Theinte.

It is to be expected therefore that the enemy will defend it stubbornly.

What will be our forces to attack it?

Three divisions (79th D.I.U.S.,[1] 26th D.I.U.S., 26th D.I.F).

Of these three divisions the 26th D.I.U.S. will already have carried out the attack of October 23d on the Bois d'Etraye and the attack on the Bois d'Ormont.

Another division, the 26th D.I.F., which carried out the attack of October 8th, and which, for two weeks in a sector continually shelled and fought over, is no longer in a condition to carry out a deep operation.

Furthermore, its relief must be considered, and, to my knowledge, nothing is yet planned regarding its relief.

Facing these three divisions, one of which will be weakened, and the other very tired, the enemy has four divisions at its disposal[2] supported by an artillery which seems at least equal to ours.

Moreover, the line which is fixed for me is none other than the First exploitation objective of my plan of engagement No. 532 S/3 of October 4th.

I had requested five divisions to attain it[3] with the object of exploiting immediately the surprise. Three were given me which carried out the attack of October 8th.

Under these conditions the question may be asked if what three divisions reinforced with six crack (élite) battalions (Senegalese battalions) against an enemy surprised tactically, could not do, whether three divisions of which two at least are worn out by a prolonged stay in a battle sector, will be capable of doing it against an enemy who has been reinforced and is on his guard?

The 17th French Army Corps is on the right bank of the Meuse, in the final phase of an engagement, in close contact with the enemy. In my opinion, it would be a mistake to think that, once on the defensive, there may be hope to win by means of small operations all the terrain which you desire to make a zone of advanced posts.

[1] After relief of the 29th D.I.U.S.

[2] Which the enemy seems bent upon reinforcing.

[3] Memorandum No. 520 S/3, of the 17th French Army Corps, dated October 2nd.

Only by means of attacks prepared and carried out with powerful forces will the enemy be forced to yield this important terrain; and to accomplish it, successive reliefs of units, as were carried out on analogous fronts (the Aisne front for example), would be necessary as a matter of course.

3. *Conclusion:*

To sum up: If the idea is to economize the forces on the right bank, *the green line may be held to for the purposes of stabilization.*

In order to attain the bistre line, considerable forces in infantry and ammunition must be provided for.

With sufficient resources of men and guns Claudel could attack on the wide front and effect so deep a penetration that he could force the evacuation of the Verdun *charnière.* Situated as he was, with no expectation of reinforcement, or even of relief for his dwindling divisions, he could hold fast and harass the enemy with artillery fire, awaiting the moment when an American advance west of the Meuse would compel the enemy to withdraw from Verdun. And this was in Claudel's mind. But neither course was open to him. His orders stood, and he was forced to continue the series of local attacks by small units which day by day took heavy toll in losses, though accomplishing a tangible success in occupying the attention of considerable German forces, and possibly this latter fact was enough to justify the course pursued.

With the episode of General Edwards's relief and the costly efforts of the 51st Infantry Brigade, October 23–27, ends the first period of the Division's duty at Verdun — days which also saw the expenditure of the Twenty-Ninth Division and its relief by the Seventy-Ninth.[1]

On October 24 the new Division Commander reported for duty — Brigadier-General Frank E. Bamford, who had commanded an infantry brigade of the First Division. On the same date General Edwards took his leave, and the Division started upon a new phase of its career. Taking to heart the last message of its original leader, the officers and men resolved loyally to "carry on," outfacing the loss of strength which pressed on the Division dangerously, indeed.

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[1] Parting messages from the Division's first commander to his men are contained in the following communications. His farewell general order reads:

1. In compliance with Paragraph 8, Special Orders No. 293, General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces, the undersigned relinquishes command of the Twenty-Sixth Division.

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2. He thanks the Division for its loyalty to him and for what it has accomplished in the common cause. He bespeaks for his successor in command the same loyalty and devotion, and he leaves the Division in full confidence that its same fine work will continue to the end.

C. R. Edwards
Major-General Commanding

To the 51st Brigade of Artillery, was addressed the following:

1. To the artillery of the Twenty-Sixth Division is due my expression of admiration for its efficiency and fighting qualities, and for its indefatigable support of our fine infantry. Artillery can desire no higher tribute than the conscious fact that it has gained the confidence, reliance, and thanks of the infantry.

2. During more than eight months of fighting service the spirit of loyalty displayed by every officer and man of the Fifty-First Field Artillery Brigade toward his duty, toward the Yankee Division and toward the Division Commander, has been fine.

3. The record of the Fifty-First Artillery Brigade in the second battle of the Marne is glorious. It went with, supported, and protected the infantry in its advance of 18½ kilometers by Château-Thierry, and afterwards, in succession, two other divisions in the advance from the Marne to the Vesle for a period of eighteen days, between July 18 and August 4, with a gain of over 40 kilometers. It is a record of which the entire division and our country justly may be proud.

I congratulate and thank the artillery brigade of the Yankee Division.

C. R. Edwards
Major-General Commanding

CHAPTER XVIII

BEFORE THE ARMISTICE AND AFTER

JUST as one groups the earlier activities of the Division at Verdun around the series of attacks of October 23–27, so one can center its later work about the operations between November 7 and November 11. The first set of operations was an endeavor to wrest from the enemy local positions of commanding importance; the second series sought to hustle the German withdrawal, which American successes west of the Meuse had rendered inevitable.

Following the action in Belleu Wood and on the slopes of Hill 360, a change was made in the Division's sector and direction of advance. The Seventy-Ninth Division, on its left, took over that portion of the Twenty-Sixth's line which included Ormont Wood; and the latter, with its front somewhat reduced, now had opposite its lines the villages of Ville-devant-Chaumont and Flabas, with the roughly wooded region known as "Bois de Ville" (Town Wood), as the principal geographical locations.

It was a time when the closest watch had to be kept on the enemy — not lest he attempt any attack, but lest he withdraw his forces unperceived under cover of a screen of rear-guards. On the left the Seventy-Ninth Division and the Fifteenth French Division kept up a pressure through local attacks and the exploitation of local successes, while to the Twenty-Sixth was given the duty of making energetic local raids on portions of the German lines for the purpose of making prisoners. Of these there were secured a considerable number almost every day — wretched fellows whose spirit was quite gone, whose general condition was deplorable. It seemed as if the entire German strength lay now in the personnel of the machine-gun and artillery branches; certainly the infantry was poor enough. There was a steady fire from the German guns on especially favored areas within our lines, such as Haumont Ravine, Bras, Charny, and the location of Division Headquarters; the forward trench lines were still sprayed by machine-gun fire at any sign of life; but the German infantry had no fight left in it. A curious episode was the effort of a group of thirty-seven Germans (including an officer), who about this time engaged two of the enlisted men of the 102d Infantry in an attempted parley regarding their surrender. They were afraid to desert; they were afraid of the American artillery; they were eager to voice their unwillingness to kill or be killed, now — as they insisted — that the war was over. The report of the American soldiers of the incident resulted, of course, in added precautions being taken against fraternization; but the incident was not without significance as reflecting the spirit of the enemy's former fighting men.

At length, almost without warning, the break came. About noon, on November 8, a party of eighty Germans wearing their packs was seen marching out of Flabas toward the rear with no effort at concealment; and at the same time word came from the Corps of other evidences of a general retirement. At once strong patrols were pushed forward from all four regiments to keep in touch. The two battalions of the 52d Infantry Brigade, which had been loaned to the Seventy-Ninth Division's right brigade on November 6, were recalled, and a new advanced line was established late in the afternoon on the eastern edge of the Heights overlooking the Azannes–Damvillers road and the low ground, to which the enemy had sulkily retreated.

All preparations were made to follow up this initial advance with the coming of daylight. But early on November 9 came orders with information that the direction of advance had been changed to the southeast, which brought as the next objective for the Twenty-Sixth the curious isolated hills called the "Ornes Twins" and the village of

Azannes. The advanced battalions stayed where they were for the moment; then, as the support battalions formed up in the new direction, the former would fall in behind. On the right the Tenth French Division would give over to the Twenty-Sixth the region known as "La Wavrille," to afford more room for the maneuver.

The advance, therefore, was undertaken. A fierce enfilade fire of machine guns on the left from Ville-devant-Chaumont checked the 104th Infantry; on the right the 101st Infantry got forward some small elements toward Saint-André Farm, but could not make good its initial gains. In the center the 102d and 103d Infantry had no better success. The following day, November 10, a second push accomplished considerably more, for the 103d Infantry, with a fine access of vigor, took Town Wood, and the 104th Infantry smartly flanked the enemy out of Ville-devant-Chaumont, as the Seventy-Ninth Division, farther to the left, succeeded in getting a firm hold on Hill 324, a commanding height from which the line of the Twenty-Sixth could be enfiladed. On the right, however, the 101st Infantry accomplished little; and a wide gap was opened during the afternoon between this flank and the French in the region of La Wavrille, of which the enemy was too weak to take advantage before it was closed by the dispatch of machine guns and a platoon of infantry, as a connecting group, posted just west of Bézonvaux. Between the inner flank of the 102d and 101st Infantry, where connection was also lost for a while, another dangerous gap was opened up. It was a disquieting day. As a result of honest effort there was little to show in the way of ground gained save in the center and on the left. Owing to its complete exhaustion the 101st Infantry was withdrawn to Côte de Talou under cover of darkness; and the meager ranks of the 102d Infantry were extended to the right to take over the line held by the Boston regiment.

Reasons why the results of these two days were not commensurate with the dogged, plucky efforts of the troops, are not far to seek. They are curiously intertwined with questions of infantry psychology. A compelling reason is to be found in the shocking depletion in the numerical strength of the infantry. Battalions, ordered to extend over a normal width of front, did not have men enough to cover half that line. Intervals between flanks became unduly wide for the same reason, which also made exceedingly difficult the organization of proper-sized patrols, connecting groups, and similar tactical detachments. The ranks of headquarters runners, signalmen, automatic rifle teams, non-commissioned officers, as well as company and battalion officers, were so thinned that the usual machinery by which any given unit functioned was in many cases vastly reduced in value when it was not crippled or missing altogether. In several cases lieutenants came away from Verdun in command of battalions, or sergeants leading their companies. The strongest representations were continually made by the infantry commanders, especially with respect to the shortage of officers. But no replacements were received by the Division while in this sector until November 8 or 9; and the draft which then arrived — about one thousand enlisted men — came too late to contribute anything material to the fighting strength of the 51st Infantry Brigade, to which the new men were assigned.[1]

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[1] In any consideration of a combat unit's numerical strength one must include its animal transport. The following extracts from the report of the Division Remount Officer are not without interest as showing, from another angle, the reduced condition of the Twenty-Sixth at this period:

"The plan of keeping animals in forward echelons was again tried in the Verdun Sector, but was met with the severest kind of animal losses from exposure, shell-fire, and gas. As a result the greater part of the artillery animals were taken back to the more or less sheltered rear echelons, while the animals of the infantry and other divisional units were stabled in the somewhat demolished but nevertheless sheltered *casernes* of Verdun. Mules for the rolling kitchens, ration carts, water carts, and a number of mules for machine guns, had necessarily to be kept up fairly close to the lines, and it was these animals that shared the

Not only were the regiments weak in numerical strength, but the troops were also weak physically. The long period of exposure, little sleep, and continual rain; the ravages of influenza and bronchial disorders; the daily exposure

brunt of shelling and exposure. The plan, however, was adopted to alternate these animals, so that after one had served several days at the front it was brought back to a rear echelon, rested and cared for, while another took its place.

"Up behind the lines picketing of animals in small groups of three, four, and six was employed as protection from shell-fire. There was an instance, however, in a certain machine-gun company, where this was not done, and twelve fine mules tied together on one picket line were completely wiped out by a shell landing directly beside them. . . .

"The situation now became extremely grave. No stone was left unturned in an endeavor to procure animal replacements at this time, but the demand was so far greater than the supply that the task was well-nigh hopeless. The fact that was always brought forward, when a desperate appeal was made for animals, was that there were twelve or more divisions who were even worse off than the Twenty-Sixth, certain artillery brigades not being able to move at all. Consequently what animals were being received at the army depots were being sent to them.

"At last, about October 17, a shipment of French stock *en route* from Bordeaux was switched at Saint Dizier to the Twenty-Sixth Division to be unloaded at Baleycourt. This shipment of 144 animals left Bordeaux made up of 96 artillery horses, 32 cavalry horses, and 16 mules. One of the horses died *en route*, and 38 horses and 4 mules were evacuated at the veterinary hospital at Treveray, being in far too poor condition for service at the front. Out of the 101 animals that arrived at Baleycourt, 48 had to be evacuated immediately for debilitation and mange, so that only 44 horses and 9 mules were left to be issued to the Division. From this number only 10 of the horses could be considered draft animals, while only 5 of the mules could be considered for heavy draft purposes. The little light-boned horses and mules, the latter doubtless Spanish, were issued to the machine-gun battalions for use in the machine-gun carts. Later the majority of these horses broke down on the march back from the front. The little mules, on the other hand, as usual went through everything, and at the end were still ready for more.

"The above shipment is just one illustration of the difficulties of securing animals at this time for a division at the front. In defense of this shipment it must be said that just previous, on account of the desperate animal situation, telegraphic instructions had been issued to all remount depots to send forward all animals that were even in fair condition.

"Another order, issued from General Headquarters at this time, stripped all wagon companies attached to depots in the S.O.S. to half strength. As a result of this the Division was fortunate to receive 200 draft mules from one of these companies. These were all excellent animals of American stock, and literally saved the day for the infantry supply companies. Shortly afterwards there was one other shipment from Bordeaux, mostly horses in poor shape, besides one or two small or miscellaneous issues of animals, obtained only after the greatest effort."

to artillery and machine-gun fire, and to gas concentration — all contributed to sap the men's vitality. Their appearance was eloquent of their wretchedness — gaunt, with faces heavily shadowed, the eyes sunk or gleaming with fever, the figure bent, the mentality dulled. One can fancy the concern of the infantry commanders on the spot, who knew the character of the tasks required, and the difficulties of the terrain.

But it is possible to assign a reason, other and more compelling than physical exhaustion, in accounting for the infantry's momentary depression. It is a truism in the art of handling troops in the field that the loss of leaders trusted by their men implies inevitably the loss of something beside. It will be recalled that General Edwards was relieved from command October 22, his successor arriving on October 24. The very day after the command passed, on October 25, the new general relieved Colonel E. L. Logan, 101st Infantry, of whom he had no personal knowledge, on the charge of inertia. On November 6 he relieved Colonel F. M. Hume, 103d Infantry, on the charge of allowing his men to fraternize with the enemy. On November 9 Brigadier-General C. H. Cole was relieved of the command of the 52d Infantry Brigade, on similar charges. Viewing this action solely from the angle of its effect on the troops, it should be understood that these officers had earned the loyalty of both officers and men. They had led their men in action; they had shared every hardship; they were depended upon by hundreds; they were obeyed without question. They were of great value in the places they occupied. All three had been privates, sergeants, and junior officers in the original units composing their commands. Secondly, the men who had followed Cole, Logan, and Hume in action believed that charges reflecting on their soldierly behavior were baseless. And be it said that none of the charges against Cole, Logan, and Hume were sustained. Cole's case did not even go to a board of inquiry, though he at once demanded one.[1] Reinstated with their regiments in February, after sojourns at the "reclassification" centers of Blois and Gondrecourt, where Logan acted as successful counsel for many officers under charges affecting their efficiency, both Hume and Logan, like Cole (who returned to his command early in December), appeared at the time to many to have been objects of a clumsily conducted, personal spite campaign. One hesitates to give credence to such reports; but one is constrained to tell all the parts of any story should one undertake to tell the whole of it.

What of the general situation, as the Division, with its companions of the Corps,[2] struggles to shake the hold of the enemy on the hills of Verdun?

The length of the Western Front the Allies are victorious; every day, whether in Flanders, Picardy, or in Champagne, they send the German reeling back in confusion. The First American Army, west of the Meuse, is also winning its objectives. Emerging at last from the Argonne Woods, rolling over the greatly reduced enemy by sheer weight of numbers, securing local successes more through the inherent fighting quality of the individual soldier than by skill in troop leadership on the part of the higher command, the Americans had begun that race northward which was to end in the vicinity of Sedan. Slowed for a while by grave deficiencies in the operation of supply and transport services, and by an overtaxing of the capabilities of the road system; checked now and again, though green infantry, called by necessity to do the work of veterans, handsomely responded; suffering, furthermore, from the lack of initiative of certain infantry units, and from faulty employment of the artillery's resources, still the army surged ahead. Escaping disaster, it obtained a victory.

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[1] The order reinstating Brigadier-General Cole is here appended:

France, November 30, 1918

From: Adjutant-General, American Expeditionary Forces.
To: Brigadier-General Charles H. Cole, Center of Information, A.P.O. 714, American Expeditionary Forces.
Subject: Relief from Fifty-Second Infantry Brigade.

1. I am directed by the Commander-in-Chief to inform you that upon his personal examination of the papers reporting the facts incident to your relief from command of the Fifty-Second Brigade, he is of the opinion that the facts did not warrant your relief, and he has therefore directed that you be reinstated to your former brigade.

2. Accordingly, orders will be issued in the near future.

By command of General Pershing
Robert C. Davis
Adjutant-General

[2] The Second Colonial Corps had taken over the Verdun front from the Seventeenth Corps; but General Claudel remained in command.

For days — ever since the first of November, and even earlier — the end was felt to be near by friend and foe alike. Knowing themselves beaten, there was nothing the German soldiers so ardently desired as to cease fighting. Superior Headquarters very properly forbade the troops to believe that peace was in the air; officers and men must continue their efforts, must employ every ounce of energy, must fight their hardest, for war continues until hostilities cease officially. Down to the smallest units stringent orders were enforced against fraternization; detailed warnings were sent out that any rumor of an armistice was nothing but German trickery. The following radio message was picked up by the Division's wireless operator at Headquarters early in the morning of November 7:

From Eiffel Tower Radio Station
Translation *November* 7, 1918, 2.35 *o'clock*

To the German High Command from Marshal Foch:

If the German plenipotentiaries desire to meet Marshal Foch for the purpose of requesting from him an armistice, they will present themselves to the French outposts following the Chimay–Fournies–La Capelle–Guise road. Orders will be issued to receive them, and to conduct them to the place designated for the meeting.

The message was sent from the French official station on the Eiffel Tower; it had every mark of authenticity. But — no, the message was not to be credited; it was probably a German forgery; there must be no relaxation of vigilance, effort, or of the will to fight. Prisoners came in daily, all with the same tale of weariness, disorganization, disintegration. All the more reason for dealing blows such as would complete the German disaster; and the huge naval fourteen-inch guns, pushed up on the railway behind Charny close to Division Headquarters, roared out destruction in voices that shook the countryside.

A fine object lesson was set in the last four days of the war. One must understand that in war there are no compromises. Either one fights or one is at peace; either one obeys or one disobeys. The soldier is given a course to follow; he pursues it till ordered to stop by proper authority. Very hard for new troops to grasp — that idea. Impossible for any one to understand the necessity of its unvarying, absolute enforcement until one has been in action. The German had asked for a cessation of hostilities; he had sent his representatives to receive the victors' terms. Beaten to his knees, he had no choice but to accept those terms. His troops asked nothing more than to be allowed to lay down their arms at once. These facts were evident; the world was aware of them; not a soldier but knew that the fighting was practically over. But military good sense and military habit only know that one fights or that one does not; they know that no change can come to pass in the world where soldiers dwell save that which is ordered by proper authority. And, therefore, implacable as a machine, the Allied forces, unmoved by fact as by rumor, continued its hammer-blows on the beaten, retiring enemy. Not till Foch spoke could the armies pause; not till Claudel spoke, echoing his master, could the troops at Verdun slow down by an ounce of strength or an inch of stride. It was splendid, that lesson.

The Division played the game through to the very end. We have seen how the infantry struggled forward on November 10. Keen to follow to the limit all the possibilities of the military situation, just as if the campaign was in full swing instead of at its conclusion, the Chief of Staff in his field order for operations on that date named points far within the enemy lines as sites for a new divisional Headquarters and other administrative centers, the objectives being farther distant still. On November 10, at 21 o'clock (9 P.M.), was published Field Order No. 105, which, oblivious of all rumor that the armistice would be signed on the 11th, directed a new attack in the direction of Les Jumelles d'Ornes, Hill 265, and Maucourt, all details of the advance being as methodically worked out and carefully prescribed as though a Leavenworth map problem was being solved. Should one wonder at the necessity for thus playing the game to the extreme of the limit, that will betray mere ignorance of military methods, military necessity, and the military mind. Hostilities were not to cease till word came from Marshal Foch himself. But that message could not be taken to mean that, the cessation of hostilities being imminent, efforts could be relaxed; and, therefore, late on the night of November 10 the orders went forward for an attack on the 11th.

What followed is of interest. One must not believe that Division Headquarters published the order for the attack on Armistice Day in any spirit of light-heartedness. It was with a secret hope that the order might be modified that it was sent forward; the thought of the infantry deploying and advancing under fire, on what would probably be the last morning of the war, was not easy to bear. How greatly this feeling was intensified can be imagined when the radio received the following message at 5.45 o'clock November 11:

From F L (Eiffel Tower)
Marshal Foch to Commander-in-Chief.

1. Hostilities will stop on the entire front beginning November 11, at 11 o'clock, French time.
2. The Allied troops shall not pass the line reached upon that date and at that hour until further orders.

(Signed) MARSHAL FOCH.

At once the order directing the cessation of hostilities on the Division's front[1] was written and hurried out. But the order for the attack to continue up to the designated hour stood unchanged. Still must the artillery send over its fire of destruction and preparation on Les Jumelles d'Ornes, Grémilly, Hill 265, and Maucourt; still must it drop its rolling barrage in advance of the infantry at "H" hour; still must the meager battalions advance on the skirts of the curtain of fire to meet the usual resistance of the enemy's artillery and machine guns.

But very soon after came news which changed the whole complexion of affairs. By motor from Corps Headquarters there arrived the Division's information officer, post-haste, with word that, in the opinion of the Corps Commander, the attack order of the morning could be modified. Pressed to state whether this modification meant that the infantry need not advance, the officer gave it as the Corps Commander's express wish that only artillery fire should be sent over and the advance of the infantry suspended.

Instantly then, by every available resource of the message center, word was hurried to the brigadiers to hold up their infantry, in the following message written by the Chief of Staff:

From: Chief of Staff
To: C. G. 51st and 52d Inf. Brig. and C.O. 51st Art. Brig.

The operations set for 9.30 o'clock are modified as follows: The artillery preparation will be carried out as per schedule stopping promptly at 11 o'clock.

The infantry will *not* advance to the attack.

D. K. MAJOR, JR.

A sigh of relief went the rounds of Headquarters. One would play the game through to the bitter limit — yes; but it was permitted to be happy that the rigor of the game had been a little modified.

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[1] Field Order 106, November 11, 1918.

The information officer, his message delivered, returns to Corps Headquarters and reports. The trip required a short half-hour by motor-car. He says that he has transmitted in person to the Division's Chief of Staff the instructions of the Corps Commander that the attack order might be modified to the extent of withholding the advance of the infantry.

And upon that, to his amazement, the Corps Staff informs him that there has been another change — that, after all, the original attack order should stand, that the infantry should participate.

What was the reason for this *volte-face?* From what source was derived the reason for the Corps' last-minute change of plan? There can be no doubt that, up to seven o'clock on the morning of November 11, the Corps intended to avoid casualties to the infantry of its divisions by authorizing their remaining in place. But, less than one hour later, one finds that, for some reason, the Corps completely reversed itself, and in a matter of the first importance.

It will be an interesting task for a commentator on the conduct of the First American Army on November 11 to determine the authority under which the Second Colonial Corps[1] enforced the order, which an hour before it had suspended, for the attack by the infantry between the hours of 9 and 11 which was like to cost America the lives of many, with the attainment of no corresponding military advantage.

Immediately after the news of this change was telephoned to Division Headquarters a second message [2] was sent forward to the brigade commanders at the hours indicated:

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[1] The Staff of the Second Colonial Corps replaced that of the XVII Corps (French) about November 6; but General Claudel retained command throughout the operations.

[2] Written by the Chief of Staff and telephoned by officer in charge of message center.

November 11, 1918 *Rush Priority*

51st Inf. Brig. 9.15
52d Inf. Brig. 9.16
51st F.A. Brig. 9.18
From: Chief of Staff
To: C.G.'s 51st and 52d Inf. Brig. and 51st Art. Brig.

Orders from Regret Corps direct that the infantry will advance to the attack as per F.O. 105, 26th Div., at 9.30. The attack will stop at 11, when hostilities will cease.

Relayed to the battalion commanders, it found some of the forward elements already under way, while others (who had received the order to stand fast) were under the necessity of assembling and forming up for the advance. The line which finally moved out, therefore, was an irregular one, the coördination of the advance by all elements being impossible under the circumstances. And by this time also word had flashed forward that eleven o'clock was to see the end of all things.

But full results were attained. On the left the 104th Infantry completed the capture of Ville-devant-Chaumont; in the center the front was advanced to the railroad; a line from Saint-André Farm to a point just west of Bezonvaux marked the limit of attainment of the right of the Division (102d Infantry).

Eleven o'clock! For two hours past the artillery had been endeavoring to loose off all its ammunition in the general direction of Metz. As the time to cease firing approached, battery commanders contrived all manner of devices by which every officer and man should share in firing the last shots of the war — they fastened lengths of wire to the lanyards so that whole gun crews could lay hold together; they fired with their watches in hand, so as not to overpass the hour, but to give full measure till the moment struck. Eleven o'clock, and the sodden infantry halted, dumbly, as if in a dream. There was no rejoicing, no noisy jubilation; the men were stupid with fatigue and the reaction which follows a too prolonged tension of the nerves. Eleven o'clock — an end of being killed! That was the thought in the hearts of the men up front, however vocable might be the generals in their professional regret, at luncheon, that the punishment of the enemy could not continue a week longer. In Verdun a colorful, frantic parade of *poilus*, British engineers, and Americans, headed by the 101st Engineer band — the Stars and Stripes flung to the breeze by the French from the cathedral towers — a vivid speech by the heroic General Marchand. At Division Headquarters everything oddly quiet, the officers and men coming, as it were, out of a curious dream, incapable of rejoicing, perhaps with hearts so full they dared not trust themselves to speak. At evening bonfires all along the line — big, roaring blazes, fit to warm the bones of whole companies; a dazzling display, both in Boche-land and for miles along our side, of flares, rockets, artillery charges, Véry lights, everything that would burn. Sentinels patrol the front to prevent any fraternization, for which the treacherous enemy appears only too eager. Boche officers appear with a white flag — a *parlementaire*, to show, in accordance with the terms of the armistice, where their mine-fields are located, and to render them harmless. The front line is accurately marked on the maps; measures of security are retained in full operation; organization commanders see to it that their men are kept strictly in hand. Immediate measures are taken to warm, feed, and shelter the men and horses.

For a day or two the Division waited for orders. It was designated at once as one of the first American organizations to receive the honor of going to the Rhine as part of the Army of Occupation. Orders were in preparation; but presently, following the reports of inspectors, and the regretful acknowledgment of the Division Commander that the reduced physical condition of both troops and animals made a march to the German area impracticable, the destination was changed, and the opportunity of sharing the honors of the Army of Occupation passed forever.

The Corps Commander called, on the day after the armistice was signed, to express his appreciation of the Division's loyal efforts to carry out his orders — orders imposed on him by the authorities of the First American Army.[1] Now, regretting the necessity of attempting operations on the Verdun front of the sort which had been assigned to his command, aware of the futility of attacking fortresses like Hill 360 with any forces other than very large ones, the Corps Commander desired to condole with the Division Commander on the losses he had incurred, by emphasizing the enormous difficulties, the supreme importance to the enemy of the Verdun front. Compared with the tasks set for the Seventeenth and Second Colonial Corps, those assigned to the units west of the Meuse were simple. And sincere was his regret that he had been obliged to fritter away, in small operations, the Thirty-Third, Twenty-Ninth, Seventy-Ninth, and Twenty-Sixth Divisions, as well as the Eighteenth, Twenty-Sixth, and Tenth French. With the weight of all seven, he was confident that he could have rolled the Germans off the Verdun hills in a single powerful stroke.

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[1] Already, at the conclusion of the first Verdun operation, General Claudel had voiced his thanks and encouragement, as follows:

Headquarters, Seventeenth Army Corps
Staff, 1*st Bureau*
October 24, 1918

From: General Claudel, commanding the Seventeenth Army Corps.
To: The Commanding General, Twenty-Sixth Division.

GENERAL: The reputation of your division preceded it here far ahead.

To all its titles of glory gained in fierce struggles, and only recently at the signal of Hattonchâtel, it has added on the 23d of October a page which perhaps is more modest, but still does it great honor.

In a few hours, as at a maneuver, it has gained all the objectives assigned it in the difficult sector of the Woods of Houppy, Etrayes and Belleau.

This operation is evidence, indeed, of superior instruction, mobility and will.

I do not know how to thank you sufficiently for your assistance, dear General, and it is my great desire to express to you all our grateful admiration for your splendid division which thus has added its name to all of those who have fought to hurl the enemy back from the outskirts of Verdun.

A leave party of six hundred was made up immediately from the infantry battalions most in need of refreshment. Brought out of the line half dazed, filthy, ragged, wet, and exhausted, the men were bathed, reclothed, and rested for a day before sending them along to the Grenoble area — the first men of the Division to receive a surcease from duty, drill, and the front line since February 8 on the Chemin des Dames.

But soon came the end of work and life on the line for all the rest. By November 14 there had straggled into the area another division. This was the Sixth — a division which had been for weeks past continually in reserve or support, making long marches day after day, with so little transport that, lacking mules, the men were between the shafts dragging the machine-gun carts. To these newcomers, therefore, the New Englanders gave place. On that day the command passed. For twenty-six days the Division had occupied the Neptune Sector and fought to enlarge its bounds, the longest period of service, be it said, which any division rendered during the Meuse–Argonne offensive of the First American Army. Only five and one half kilometers of ground were gained; but what that ground was, let any testify who fought before Verdun, the historic field of blood, and tears, and imperishable glory, where, with every task accomplished, in the face of supreme difficulty, the Twenty-Sixth ended an incomparable fighting career.

CHAPTER XIX

RECONSTRUCTION — THE MONTIGNY-LE-ROI AREA

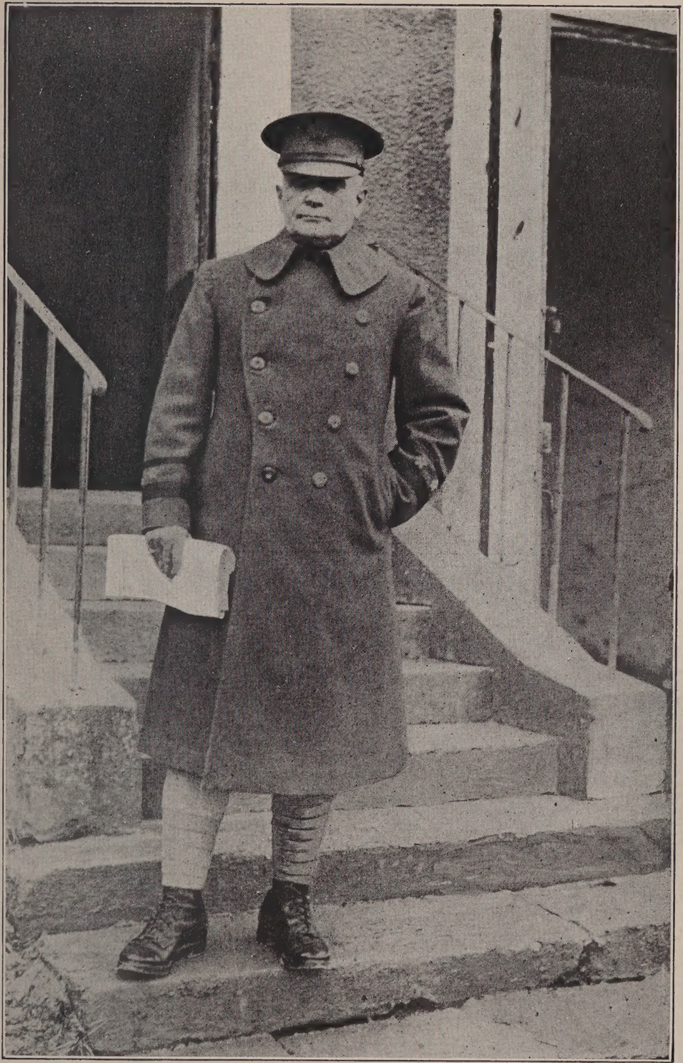
BY comfortable marches, arranged with the intention that no unit should be required to cover more than twenty kilometers in one day, the Division moved along southward. For two or three nights it billeted in the region it had traversed on the way up to the Saint-Mihiel action; it crossed the Bar-le-Duc–Commercy line, entered the area between Gondrecourt and Neufchâteau, and thence moved southward again until, on November 23, Division Headquarters was opened in Montigny-le-Roi, a village north of Langres between Chaumont and Bourbonne-les-Bains. Some difficulty arose from the fact that the Twenty-Ninth and Eighty-First Divisions were also moving south at the same time as the Twenty-Sixth, while other troops, both French and American, were crossing the line of march of the Division to join the Armies of Occupation on the Rhine. It happened occasionally, therefore, that more than one unit would arrive in a town on the same afternoon, each expecting to be billeted there and possessing competent authority to do so — a confusion which required much telephoning to the troop movement bureau at Army Headquarters in Souilly with requests for an immediate solution of the difficulties; sometimes also the bureau adjusted matters. More often the unit commanders concerned made haste to occupy the nearest village which at the moment stood vacant — being more solicitous to shelter and rest their men than to abide by march tables, graphs, and billeting assignments which, as a result of the unforeseen chances of every march, had not worked out according to the Staff's calculations. On the whole, however, the troops came along without undue discomfort, while the daily "hike" over good roads, under a bright wintry sky, acted as a veritable tonic. The march was mostly hard on the supply departments and the couriers, who had to travel long distances to connect up with the various organization Headquarters for the delivery of rations and orders.

Two incidents principally marked the week's journey. The first was the transfer of some forty battalion and company officers to the Thirty-Second Division for duty in the Coblenz area. These were picked out from regiments on the march, incontinently, and sent off much bewildered at their involuntary change of allegiance.

The second incident occurred November 18, when Headquarters was at Benoite-Vaux. On this date Brigadier-General Bamford was relieved, after a command lasting less than a month. One looks for traces of this officer's personal influence and direction on the Division's actions, movements, or life, but finds little or nothing to record except his orders relieving the brigade and regimental commanders, to which allusion has already been made. General Bamford kept touch with conditions "up front," going in person to the forward lines very frequently, and set an excellent example of military bearing. But, generally speaking, his exercise of command was merely that of a titular head, of an interim executive. In no sense did he ever lead, inspire, or guide the men under him. By the officers he was regarded as the commander who gave his authorization to whatever the Chief of Staff suggested as being desirable or necessary. It was to the latter, all through the Bamford régime, that officers looked for orders; anything resembling a personal touch between the Division Commander and his brigade or regimental commanders was far to seek.

In his stead there came to the Division a commanding general who, within an hour of his assumption of command, made his presence, authority, good-will, and ideals of discipline plainly felt. This was Major-General Harry C. Hale. Graduated from West Point in 1883, a colonel of infantry in the Regular establishment in 1915, General Hale had enjoyed a more than usually varied duty — against the Indians, with volunteer troops, in the Philippines, in China, as *aide-de-camp* to General Wesley Merritt, and as adjutant-general of two important departments. Appointed Brigadier and Major-General in 1917, General Hale was placed in command of Camp Zachary Taylor at Louisville, Kentucky, and subsequently commanded the Eighty-Fourth Division. This command he had all through the period of training and also in France, until the Eighty-Fourth was broken up to furnish replacements, army troops, and various detachments; upon which, after a brief stay at Langres, he was assigned to the Twenty-Sixth. His position was for the moment a little difficult. Himself without experience as a field commander in France, he had veteran fighting troops under him; he was an entire stranger to his Staff. And how General Hale, by energy, kindliness, the exaction of a firm discipline on every officer and man, and by "playing the game" hard and squarely, put new interest, vigor, and spirit into weary troops, would furnish interesting material to any student of the psychology both of armies and of individual soldiers.

In the Montigny area the Division came under the orders of the Fifth Corps (Major-General C. P. Summerall). At once was begun a course of training "for eventualities." Officers and men were impressed with the fact that an armistice does not mean a peace — that hostilities might recommence — that the Division might be called upon to perform duty in Germany. There was to be no assumption on the part of anybody that its work was over. This was healthy. It is not quite sure that everybody believed it; but at any rate, proceeding on the principle that "next to making war, there was no occupation for the soldier



MAJOR-GENERAL HARRY C. HALE

better than preparing for war," the days were quickly filled with drills, brisk physical exercise, and military study for all ranks — with the result that, sooner than one could dream, every regiment recovered tone and spirits. It was the old story of work's tonic effect. It made no difference that there seemed to be no definite object in the work. That officers and men were kept busy at something, all day, every day, was enough to accomplish the desired result.

To his Staff, as to every battalion, the new Division Commander reiterated the one thought: That the one purpose he desired to accomplish was to restore the whole Division to its old-time snap, smartness, and contentment, to recover its health and spirits, to bring it home — when the time came — in perfect condition.

To this end other factors were soon to contribute very materially. Leaves for officers and men were now arranged by regular schedule, it being intended that everybody should receive ten days' *permission.* This could be spent by the enlisted men in the area in the south of France, not far from Aix-les-Bains, set aside and carefully organized for the purpose — the hotels, theaters, and all other tourist accommodations being leased by the American authorities for the benefit of troops on leave, while their entertainment was confided to a large extent to the Y.M.C.A. and other welfare associations. Officers went very generally to points on the Riviera, Nice and Cannes being the principal centers. Paris at this time was universally barred as a place in which to spend one's leave, the public misbehavior of a few having sufficed to exclude all others; but other interesting cities were available beside the Nice area, and some officers took this opportunity to get to such famous scenes of the war as Rheims, or even to revisit Verdun. And leave worked wonders. The men, who went on *permission* in parties of six hundred at a time, made excellent records for good behavior; they all came back freshened and brightened — after scores of the quaintest adventures.[1]

Another very important feature in the rejuvenation of the Division at this time was the return to its embrace of many of its sons from hospital or from service with other units. No longer were these soldiers tossed about from replacement battalion to casual camp and back again, heartsick and lonely. It was to their home that they were sent now — back to their "buddies," back to their company and kin. And their happiness was touching; and the satisfaction of the typical worried unit commander over the return of his lads to his care was boundless. The rejoicing in all ranks gave an indication clear enough that finally, after months of following a wrong trail, the powers had hit on the proper method of handling men released from hospital.

Early in December the prisoners lost at Seicheprey, in Epieds, and elsewhere were returned to the Division. They had no particular complaint of harsh treatment by their German captors; but they all agreed in deploring the wretched lot of the British, and especially that of the Russians, in the various camps.

A change appeared to come into the attitude of higher authority toward the Division. Compliments from the Corps Commander were frequent on various points in the discipline, appearance, and condition of regiments or trains. And at Christmas time, the Twenty-Sixth was honored by being designated both as the Division with whom President Wilson should eat Christmas dinner, and as that which should furnish the Presidential guard of honor when Mr. Wilson visited General Headquarters at Chaumont.[1] It had been intimated at an earlier date that the presidential party would review the Division by driving through the area over a designated route along which the various regiments should be drawn up. Full preparations were made for this ceremony, and also for a more conventional division review; positions were staked out; units were practiced in the required formations; preliminary march orders were issued. But this plan was changed later to a review by the President of detachments from all near-by divisions at Humes, north of Langres, to be held on the morning of December 25. To this review the Twenty-Sixth sent a provisional battalion of infantry, composed of what were deemed the four best-drilled companies of the four regiments — "B," 101st; "K," 102d; "F," 103d; "L," 104th. From the 101st Field Signal Battalion was sent one company; from the 101st Engineers went Company "F"; from the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion went Companies "A," "B," "C," "D," the troops being transported in trucks to and from the reviewing field. Immediately after this ceremony the President drove to Montigny-le-Roi, inspected some billets, and later took Christmas dinner with officers from Division Headquarters and all units of the Division, in a hospital building on the edge of the village, where great efforts had been made to receive the Division's distinguished guest with full honor. The general impression made by the troops on this occasion may best be summarized by the telegram of the Commander-in-Chief to General Hale:

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[1] The Corps Commander wrote a letter to the Commanding General of the Division, in which he comments on the "high standards of conduct and soldierly pride manifested by members of the Twenty-Sixth Division during their presence in the Auvergne leave area. Their behavior was such as to attract the favorable notice of the commanding officer of that area, and he was so highly impressed that he has communicated his sentiments in a complimentary letter with reference thereto. The members of this leave detachment reflected credit upon the Division, the Corps, and the American Army, and have established a standard worthy of emulation by all who succeed them."

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[1] The 2d Battalion, 102d Infantry; and band, 101st Infantry. The orders were as follows:

Headquarters First Army
American Expeditionary Forces, France
20 *Dec.* '18

From: Chief of Staff, 1st Army, A.E.F.
To: Commanding General, 26th Division, A.E.F.
Subject: Visit of President of the United States.

1. The Army Commander desires me to inform you that, on the recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief, the President has selected the 26th Division as being the division he will visit on Christmas Day. This selection was made on the ground that the 26th Division had the longest period of service in France.

2. The Army Commander desires that you be present at the Presidential review at Humes, which is to start at 10.30 A.M. on December 25, 1918, so that you may conduct the President from the review ground to such town or towns in your area as he may desire to visit. The Army Commander desires me to say that all organizations in the area should be prepared for this visit, billets properly policed and men lined up outside of same awaiting the arrival of the President. He also desires that the non-commissioned officers in charge of quarters be ready and on the alert to precede the President and the Commander-in-Chief into such billets as they may desire to inspect.

3. The President has expressed a desire to eat Christmas dinner with the men, and to that end it is directed that you select some organization which the President and his party can visit at dinner time and eat the soldiers' dinner with the men. In the party it is estimated that there will be somewhere in the neighborhood of 40 persons.

H. A. Drum
Chief of Staff

Official:
Laurence Halstead
Colonel, General Staff
A.C. of S., G–3

G.H.Q., Dec. 26, 1918

C.G., Twenty-Sixth Division

I desire to congratulate the Division on the excellent work of the battalion which represented it as the guard of honor at Chaumont, on the fine appearance and discipline manifested by the men during the visit of the President of the United States to the billets of the Division, and on the splendid appearance made by the detachments representing the Division in the review for the President at Humes, France, December 25, 1918.

PERSHING

By the first of January, rumors as to the early return of the Division to the United States became rife. A searching inspection by fifteen officers from General Headquarters, which occurred just after New Year's, gave point to the gossip; the fact that the Division was known to have won a very high rating on this occasion did not dim the general hope and expectation. Nothing official, however, was allowed to leak out in the line of positive information. January schedules for drill inspections, terrain exercises and maneuvers were prepared with the usual painstaking care; the daily routine was not changed by a hair's breadth; the attention to duty was not relaxed. Not a hint was let fall, officially, of what was actually in store. The news, when it did arrive, came as a complete surprise.

Division Headquarters was profoundly quiet one afternoon. In the entrance hall of the narrow house an officer cautioned silence to all who came and went; in the upper rooms the typewriters had ceased their chatter; outside the couriers had coaxed their roaring motor-cycles to something like decency. For in the office of the Chief of Staff, the Corps Commander was lecturing on the tactics of the Meuse–Argonne advance. And when General C. P. Summerall talks of war, not a soul but cranes to hear every word. Intent, eagerly interested, a tightly wedged crowd of field and staff officers, just in from a divisional terrain exercise, was learning anew some priceless lessons. And suddenly a curious rustle, a flutter, a quietly suppressed exclamation, broke the silence from the upper regions. A wide-eyed sergeant from the message center clattered halfway down the stairs — remembered his drill — and, finishing on tiptoes, whispered with respectful violence to the sentinel captain in the hall, who stifled a hallelujah. From the telegraph office came a slip, and the captain pondered whether he would risk having charges preferred and shout the news it contained through the door to the Corps Commander's audience. Two days before all officers had been charged explicitly that they were not to accept or discuss any rumor of a homeward move at all — they were to bend all their energies on preparing for warlike eventualities. But now! The message center had received the glad tidings; in a moment the couriers and orderlies would know it; already it was hard to suppress the cheers that rose unbidden from the upstairs region; yet one must wait, before getting the news to the Chief of Staff, until the Corps Commander had finished his exposition of the accepted theory of the employment of machine guns during the initial stages of the infantry attack!

One may be permitted to guess that perhaps the sentinel captain did whisper the tidings to one or two of his associates near the door. It is possible that the audience picked echoes of the news out of the very air, with nothing said at all. But certain it is that not for an instant did the attention relax even by a hair; not an eye wavered in its stony glare at the distinguished lecturer; not an ear but remained pricked in proper deference. One fancies that it was the demeanor of those officers during that hour of schooling which led the Corps Commander to extol the surpassing discipline of the Twenty-Sixth.

This was the bit of news that clicked in over the wire January 8, 1919:

Bar-sur-Aube, Jan. 8, 1919

C.G. 26th Div.

Following telegram from G.H.Q. is repeated for your information and necessary action quote no 3048 G–3 commanding general S.O.S. has been directed this date to prepare 26th Division for return to United States and orders will issue from Commanding General S.O.S. for the movement of Division by rail to the Le Mans area for preparation period all orders for disposition of material animals and surplus equipment will issue from Commanding General S.O.S. period first elements will arrive in Le Mans area January 20th or as soon thereafter as practicable end quote acknowledge.

DRUM

Busy, indeed, were the days that followed. To go back a little, we should recall that the artillery did not accompany the Division on its march down from Verdun to the Montigny area. Barely capable of fetching its guns along, owing to the depleted state of its animal transport, the brigade halted in the vicinity of Ligny-en-Barrois to take account of stock. Here it remained for some three weeks, turned in all its animals save those required for the ration and baggage wagons, as well as a great part of its general artillery equipment. Toward the end of December it rejoined the Division; but parked its guns under guard at the detraining point (La Ferte-sur-Amance), and ceased to exist as a brigade equipped for field service. It is a curious illustration of how things are and must be done in an army, that, because a consignment of tractors for the howitzers had arrived for the 51st F.A. Brigade at Marseilles, a detail was required to go and fetch them to where the brigade was stationed, even though the Fifty-First would never use them.

A colorful interlude in the preparations for the homeward movement occurred on January 15, a brief and brilliant half-hour, when the French bestowed, as it were, a final Godspeed on the Division which for so many months had ranked high in their affections. With only the briefest warning arrangements were made to receive at Mandres-les-Nogent both the American Commander-in-Chief and the famous defender of Verdun, the second soldier in France after the peerless Foch, Marshal Pétain, who was to decorate with the Croix de Guerre the colors of the regiment and the battalion which had done so valiantly at Marcheville on September 26, the 102d Infantry. On a gray, misty afternoon the battalion was paraded, the cross was affixed to the colors by the Marshal in person with all the appropriate and stirring ceremony prescribed for that occasion; and then, turning to General Pershing, Pétain affixed to his breast also the little bronze cross with its green and red ribbon. It was a brief affair; but how deeply the honor and its method of presentation touched the hearts of the regiment and of the whole Division, all those can testify who shared in the emotions of the moment.

One should record also, at this place, before the Division boards the trains for the west, that changes in command continued all through the months of November and December. To the command of the 52d Infantry

Brigade, following General Cole's relief, there was assigned General Shelton, whose place (in the 51st Infantry Brigade) was taken by Brigadier-General L. L. Durfee on November 23. As Cole returned, however, early in December, General Durfee was transferred away again, almost before he had settled into his new command. Major P. W. Loughridge was assigned to the Staff as Assistant Chief of Staff, G–3, in place of Lieutenant-Colonel J. L. Howard, formerly Divisional Machine-Gun Officer, who had been doing duty as G–3, but who now returned to the United States. A large number of other officers came at this time from replacement centers, to fill vacancies in command. The ruling then in force, that no promotions could be made or approved subsequent to the armistice, had summarily ended the hopes of many field and company officers who had brought their units through all the fighting. Colonel H. I. Bearss, 102d Infantry, was relieved for physical disability and succeeded by Colonel D. Potts: Colonel F. M. Hume's place with the 103d Infantry was taken by Colonel P. W. Arnold, whose death by accident, as the Division was moving toward the embarkation area, was much lamented. Command of the 101st Machine-Gun Battalion fell to Major L. H. Watres on December 27; the Division Surgeon, Colonel R. S. Porter, was transferred at his own request, and was succeeded by Lieutenant-Colonel T. L. Jenkins. In the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion, Major W. R. Carpenter took command on December 20; Major A. R. Crafts took over the 101st Field Signal Battalion on January 11; Lieutenant-Colonel F. E. Jones assumed command of the 101st Sanitary Train on December 10; Lieutenant T. J. Byrne was assigned to take the Headquarters Troop on January 5.

There was great activity in cleaning all ordnance equipment, counting and sorting ammunition, applying cosmoline and the like to pistols, machine guns, and other metal liable to rust. Harness, saddles, instruments — every bit of armament, in short, save the rifles and the men's own packs and helmets — were turned in. It was a Division lightly equipped, indeed, but rated high for the good condition of the equipment it got rid of, which got orders to move on January 17, and took up its march to the troop trains January 21, this time headed definitely toward home.

The movement to the embarkation area, which lay between Le Mans and Tours, in the Department of Le Sarthe, was made, uneventfully, in a leisurely manner, under the direction of the Commanding General of the Service of Supply, the last units arriving in the spacious new area on February 4, where Headquarters had been opened in the trim little town of Ecommoy.

CHAPTER XX

HOMEWARD — THE LAST DAYS

THERE were two problems which immediately presented themselves to the Division Commander, once the troops were settled down in the Le Mans area. The first was: How shall we keep the men well in hand and entirely contented? The second problem, really a corollary of the first, had to do with the profitable occupation of the soldier's leisure hours — hours no longer required for the military drill and exercise which fit men for combat.

Home was almost in sight; but unavoidable delays in operating the ocean transport schedule would have the effect of making the men restless. With all the pressure of actual war-time necessity relaxed, in spite of all efforts to maintain good habits of military bearing and discipline, these would tend inevitably to decline from the Division's high standards. The restless and unruly would get to straying — falling into the prevalent vice of the whole Expeditionary Force; the good men would get rusty from lack of employment.

Some wise and far-seeing orders framed at General Headquarters took care of part of the problem. Under their provisions there were granted generous leaves to large contingents of good-conduct men, to visit Paris, London, and other historic cities or centers which it was most desirable American soldiers should see. Here the leave parties were admirably handled, being provided with capable guides from the welfare agencies; and everything possible was done to insure that the men should derive lasting benefit from their experience. To other regular leave areas, such as those established on the slopes of the Pyrenees, in Savoy, or near Saint-Malo, many more enlisted men were sent for ten-day periods.

But what deserves special mention is the grandiose scheme for the education of American troops in France, which, originated largely by civilian leaders of one of the welfare societies, was pushed vigorously, beginning in December, 1918, by the army authorities. It was a scheme so typically American as to be a classic of its kind. And that it was diverted from the rocks of disaster, that what one may venture to term its delightful madness produced tangible results of any kind, is largely due to the good faith with which the recipients of its benefits went in to claim them. The plan was partly based on the army regulation prescribing the establishment of post schools wherever practicable, supervised by the chaplains, where the men could be taught the various elementary grammar-school subjects. This was the excellently solid foundation; but on it was reared a superstructure with pinnacles which towered high and glittered gayly, but which (in the eyes of the bilious) appeared not a little flimsy. Before the Division came to the embarkation area a beginning was made. In all units classes were organized in reading, writing, arithmetic, and history. For the illiterate, the foreigner whose English was imperfect, and for the man of little schooling, a great deal of advantageous work was planned; and so far a considerable good was undoubtedly accomplished. The Division Commander inclined wisely to have special stress laid on teaching the illiterates; there were marked degrees of difference in the enthusiasm with which unit commanders embraced the plan; and great divergences existed in the relative skill and enterprise of the school officers in charge of the teaching. It was exceedingly difficult to get proper school supplies, textbooks, and the simplest apparatus. The men detailed to attend school did not exhibit an absolutely uniform joy upon receipt of their orders; there were some who reincarnated the cheerful dunces of all the schoolrooms of history. The expenditure of effort was enormous; but perhaps, when one hears of a half-dozen men who were taught to write a letter home for the first time in their lives, the time, cost, and final inevitable scrapping of the whole elementary-school machinery were justified.

This is less easy of proof when one considers the loftier reaches of the A.E.F. educational plans. It was proposed that selected officers and men, of at least high-school training, should be given the advantages of short courses at certain French centers of learning like Rennes, Lyons, Montpellier, Toulouse, Grenoble, and the Sorbonne; or of similar courses at the English universities. Another group, in furtherance of still another splendid scheme, were to be sent to Beaune, where the widely heralded A.E.F. "University" was inaugurated in February. Exactly what it was proposed to accomplish by these plans for attendance at advanced university courses, with no preparation, with most vaguely defined objectives, is a little difficult to tell. One may presume that the originators of the plan had in mind the idea that our men would get a taste of foreign culture, a look through foreign eyes, an echo of foreign languages, an impression of foreign civilization. It was doubtless hoped that some would be enough attracted to commence serious study and longer courses instead of hurrying home. Here was apparently a way, moreover, by which a large number of good officers and men could be kept profitably occupied and interested during the time of waiting for their ship to sail; and perhaps it was this very practical if unofficial consideration which gave ballast to that which, considered as anything remotely resembling a real educational plan, appeared merely fantastic. In elaborating and carrying out this plan, the Young Men's Christian Association was very active. To the Beaune center of scholastic contemplation and academic research not a great many students applied from the Twenty-Sixth Division. Inaugurated only a short time prior to the departure of the New Englanders for home, its advantages did not seem to outweigh those of the Division's various home towns; the few "YD" men who sought culture in the heart of Burgundy were mainly those not closely identified with the Division's original membership.

Another means of keeping the men contented had its origin outside of the Division, and was applied with that singular earnestness and elaboration of machinery which marked so many aspects of the American adventure in army-making. One began to receive, about this time, impassioned circulars from General Headquarters on the necessity of maintaining the morale of our troops; their recreations, amusements, and sports must be carefully supervised, made very real and helpful, adding (when possible) that touch of refinement and home culture which only carefully chosen feminine society can impart. One must devise all sorts of games; establish circulating libraries, moving-picture shows, dances, concerts, vaudeville entertainments; there must be "morale officers" as already there were "school officers." Battery commanders and platoon leaders who once had been leaders in battle should now become football coaches or leaders of community singing. There were not any more soldiers to be made, no more martial spirit to inculcate, no more need of whetting the fighting edge of the human material; there were only some thousands of hearty, well-fed youths to keep happy — so that their last memories of army life would be haloed in a rosy, golden glow. "Welfare work" was to be made the be-all and end-all of life in the embarkation area.

To these orders of higher authority, therefore, the Division officers applied themselves. The Division Machine-Gun Officer's duties now were limited to arranging with the authorities of the Embarkation Area [1] and with the Y.M.C.A. headquarters in Le Mans for suitable apparatus for athletic contests and moving-picture shows; the Munitions Officer had the task of escorting sixteen young ladies from the Y.M.C.A. about the area every afternoon and evening, to dances arranged for the enlisted men, a staff reconnaissance car and an artillery staff car being assigned for the use of these welfare workers. Officers of the General Staff sections were given all sorts of odd details, from supervising the official photographing of localities where the Division was in action, to checking up citations for decorations; at Headquarters only the office of the Division Adjutant continued to function as usual and with unabated speed — and here was much work to do, for the final records of each man in the Division were now by way of being completed. It really was difficult to find work enough for all hands. One should remember that the artillery had no guns, gear, or horses; the three battalions of machine-gunners had no machine guns; the splendid military police were superseded in their duties by the area police; services such as the ammunition, sanitary and supply trains, ordnance, gas, or remount, all were left with no employment at all, or at least found their daily duties enormously reduced. The 101st Engineers, however, that ever-ready outfit which represented the very best of the Division, were working as usual. Attached to the Embarkation Area temporarily, they cheerfully hammered away on the roads, filling in the holes and renewing the surface which the heavy trucks continually wore away. The Inspector and the Judge-Advocate were also occupied; but there were scores of officers and hundreds of enlisted men whose daily tasks were few and light enough. There was ingenuity required not only to keep them happy, but also to keep them out of mischief.

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[1] The former Commanding General and Staff of the 3d Corps, with the Staff, military police, and detachments of the former 83d Division.

It was proposed at first by the Area Headquarters to give the men a course of target practice, going to the ranges at Mayet and near Saint-Biez by battalions. But this order was very soon rescinded. It was found really impracticable to carry it out in the time allowed. The ranges were in need of extensive repairs; materials for targets and target apparatus were all lacking; the continuous winter rains had turned the ground of the ranges into cold marshes, where it would be most undesirable for the men to camp out, in view of the fact that they must now be kept in good physical condition. And so, once again, recourse must be had to methods and schemes not exactly military to insure that the troops remain hardy and hearty.

One potent contribution to this end — and a means refreshingly soldierly — was the review of the Division which was made by the Commander-in-Chief on February 19, on a field near Mayet. For days there were held a series of preparatory drills and rehearsals, for the limited area of the reviewing field made accuracy of formation and smoothness of movement indispensable; elaborate preparation had to be worked out for the transportation to and from the field of distant units and for their subsistence; the organization of the ground itself, which was a shallow hollow set about with pine woods, required the greatest care of the staff officers concerned. But, as matters turned out, all went well. In a drizzle of misty rain the great array of troops was curiously somber and impressive, the bright color of the flags, the bluish sheen of the oiled steel helmets, and the gleam of the bayonets topping the mass, being in high and picturesque relief. The Commander-in-Chief, mounted on a white horse, was not content with the usual formal ride around the troops; he threaded his way in and out, between the platoons, asking questions, making comments, his eye everywhere. And the summary of his impressions of the Division is best conveyed in the following letter:

American Expeditionary Forces
Office of the Commander-in-Chief
March 21, 1919

My dear General Hale:

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to congratulate you, and through you all the officers and men of the Twenty-Sixth Division, on their splendid appearance at the inspection and review which was held near Ecommoy on February 19. The spirit and soldierly bearing of all ranks pleased me very much, and was what one would have expected of a division with such a long and excellent record in France.

Arriving in the autumn of 1917, the division went through the prescribed course of instruction until early in 1918, when, brigaded with the French, it entered the line for a month and a half's further training north of Soissons, in the Chemin des Dames Sector. It was withdrawn for rest when the German offensive of March 21 necessitated its immediate return to the line in the La Reine and Boucq Sectors, north of Toul. Here it had two important engagements — one in the Apremont Forest, where it repulsed with loss a heavy German raid, and at Seicheprey, where casualties on both sides amounted to approximately 2000 men.

On July 18 the Division was thrown into the battle between the Aisne and the Marne, advancing in seven days more than 17 kilometers against determined enemy opposition, and capturing the towns of Epieds, Trugny, Torcy, Belleau and Givry.

It next took part in the American offensive of September at Saint-Mihiel. Operating under the Fifth Corps in the Rupt and Troyon Sectors, north of Saint-Mihiel, it captured Bois-des-Eparges, Hattonchâtel, and Vigneulles.

Later, during the Meuse–Argonne offensive, it attacked northeast of Verdun, and aided in the storming of Etrayes Ridge, capturing Bois de Belleu and the Bois d'Ormont, one of the most formidable heights in that region. The Division was in this sector when the armistice called a halt to active operations.

Each soldier should be proud of the share which the Twenty-Sixth Division has had in adding glory to the fighting record of our armies, and I want every man to know of my own appreciation, and that of his fellows throughout the American Expeditionary Forces, for the splendid work which has been done.

Very sincerely yours

John J. Pershing

The general impression which the Division made during its stay in the Le Mans area was exceedingly good. From Embarkation Headquarters came nothing but expressions of pleasure at the workmanlike, self-sufficient manner in which the troops took care of themselves. Here was efficient staff work, which required no guidance or assistance; here was a strict discipline; here was a notable spirit of pride and the desire to play the game handsomely. From the leave areas, from Paris, from General Headquarters, came varied bits of testimony reflecting satisfaction — now with the behavior of the men, now with the efficient work of the adjutants or the inspectors. It was "a good war," just then — a time when the Division felt a contentment which came not so much from welfare work as from the consciousness that it was made up of good and well-tried soldiers.

Within the Division was originated an activity which had a very definite bearing on the continuation of this spirit of contentment. The Division Commander, believing firmly in the value of competitive sports, organized on March 10–12 a divisional tournament, held at Ecommoy, to which all units sent entries.

There was a series of military events — such as platoon and company drills, a road march of ten kilometers, gas mask races, tent pitching, and rifle sighting; while to these contests were added field and track events including tug-of-war, short distance dashes, jumping, soccer, football, and boxing. The final meet had been preceded by a long series of elimination contests in each battalion, so that the teams and individuals who met at Ecommoy represented the best that the Division had to offer, and a great success this meet surely was. Blessed with beautiful weather, favored by the attendance of General Summerall and other high ranking officers, the competitions were keenly contested and in a good sporting spirit. Without a delay or hitch in the management throughout, the tournament accomplished its purpose exactly. To the 104th Infantry was awarded the great silver challenge cup which the Division Commander had presented as the prize for the organization winning the most points; and fairly, indeed, as the result of hard training and game fighting, did Colonel Cheatham's boys win the coveted trophy.

By now the end was close at hand. In all units there had been made a careful check of the personnel; embarkation passenger lists were compiled; the inspectors made a final round. It was ordered that no unit could proceed until every trace of vermin was gone, so the greatest efforts were made to eliminate from person, clothing, and blankets every trace of the head or body louse which was such a torment to the soldier; no venereal case could go home; no unit could be given a clearance from its billets until everything was policed and left in an absolutely clean and orderly condition. It should be noted that, under the above provisions, not a single man was left behind, and only one company was held back for one day to complete putting its house in order.

For a moment a pause was made while the Division presented to the Embarkation Area the recreation hut, in the city of Le Mans, which bore its name and insignia. Erected through contributions of residents of York Harbor, Maine, who sent Miss Grace Thompson to France to arrange for its building, the "York Harbor YD Hut" was built by details from the 101st Engineers in some thirty working hours. Consisting of a canteen, recreation and assembly room with a stage and big fireplace, kitchen, five sleeping-rooms, officers', and women's quarters, the "Hut" was tastefully designed and painted to suggest an old-fashioned New England dwelling. And the dedication ceremonies, held on March 17, made a graceful good-bye from the Division to the Americans still to go home.

There had been changes of command up to a very few weeks before leaving France. On February 7, Brigadier-General Sherburne returned to his well-beloved artillerymen, relieving General Glassford who had done so finely with them; February 22, Major John R. Sanborn took command of the 102d Machine-Gun Battalion, succeeding Major W. R. Carpenter; February 28, Major S. F. Westbrook took command of the 101st Machine-Gun Battalion. And other changes were made, springing from their return to duty with the Division of Colonel Edward L. Logan and Colonel Frank M. Hume (February 11). Another hearty welcome met Colonel R. K. Hale, formerly second in command of the 101st Artillery, who returned to the Division, on the eve of sailing, as Chief of Staff. He succeeded Colonel D. K. Major, Jr., transferred to duty with the Service of Supply. Colonel J. H. Allen, M.C., was assigned to the Division at this time as Surgeon.

Of the actual voyage home there are no incidents to record which have a permanent interest. Proceeding to Brest, where the troops were passed rapidly through final inspections, the transports were boarded in good order. Conditions at the camp in Brest, which had caused a great uproar to be raised in the American newspapers, were found to be actually very good. The men were not too crowded, and were comfortable. Here were issued new shoes, clothing, and blankets to those requiring them; minute examinations were made to ascertain the presence of any communicable disease; but the delays were exceedingly brief. The first contingents, embarking on the *Mount Vernon*, *Agamemnon*, and *America*, got off within only a few hours of each other; the rest followed at the briefest possible intervals. Sailing on the afternoon of March 26, the first homeward-bound transport, the *Mount Vernon*,[1] arrived in Boston on the morning of April 4, to meet the vociferous, moving welcome of all New England. And every day, for a week or more, succeeding transports brought home in safety the various regiments, trains, and battalions, until the whole Division was again concentrated at Camp Devens, Massachusetts. The 101st Trench Mortar Battery (3 officers, 184 enlisted men) had preceded the rest of the Division toward the ports of embarkation by some weeks. Together with other similar units it was designated as part of one of the earliest contingents of combat troops to return to the United States; but it embarked at Saint-Nazaire on March 30 and arrived in Hoboken, New Jersey, on April 12, immediately proceeding to Camp Devens.[1]

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[1] On board the *Mount Vernon* were Division Commander, Staff, Division Headquarters; Military Police; Headquarters Troop; Headquarters 52d Infantry Brigade; 101st Engineers (less Co. C); 101st Engineers Train; 104th Infantry.

The events of the days which followed the Division's arrival can all be grouped around three principal happenings: the review at Camp Devens on April 22, the parade in Boston on April 25, and the discharge of the officers and men on April 28–30.

One could not chronicle, in twice these pages, all the manifestations of joy, of loving pride, and of affection, which were planned by the New England towns for their "boys." [2] Touching as were the eager desires of the families, friends, and homes of the men to give them an immediate welcome, they could not for the moment be satisfied. Of first importance it was to keep the men at hand, ready for discharge; it was only as the result of the most urgent representations by the most important persons in New England that the War Department was brought to sanction even the divisional parade in Boston. Necessarily insensible to any call but that of utility, the Department was obliged to ignore the sentiments which filled the hearts both of the returned soldiers and the communities; the strictest orders forbade the participation in local parades, welcoming receptions, or any similar demonstration, of any officer or man in the Division.[3] Daily there came to Headquarters committees from cities and civic organizations, seeking to arrange some such celebration, happy in representing the happiness of their community; but each time they had to be refused. Not till the men were discharged from the service could they receive the welcome of their home towns; and with this answer the delegations had to be content.

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[1] General C. H. Cole and a small party had been sent ahead of the Division to assist in preparations for homecoming.

[2] Approximately 57 per cent of the officers and men who went overseas with the Division returned with it. Battle casualties totaled as follows: Killed, 2168; wounded, 13,000; prisoners of war, 451. Replacements furnished to the Division numbered 14,411.

[3] Individual passes, good for forty-eight hours, were issued; but on condition that the soldier should not join any public or official demonstration.

It was partly with the purpose of meeting this desire of all New England to welcome its own, that the Division Commander extended his invitation to the Governors of the New England States to review the Division on the afternoon of April 22 at Camp Devens. And a notable event in the varied history of the Twenty-Sixth this review did, indeed, prove to be. On an afternoon of flawless spring weather, in the presence of a crowd which was estimated to include not less than 300,000 persons, the troops, in full field equipment, to the music of a massed band of 300 pieces, behind their regimental colors which that day were decorated with the battle streamers bearing the names of major engagements, swept down the Camp Devens parade ground in perfect order, faultless rhythm, and steady cadence, which thrilled the vast crowd to the very marrow. Before the review there was held the ceremony of awarding decorations — Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, and Croix de Guerre — to some forty-five officers and men; and in this ceremony the Division's former commander, Major-General Edwards, was called upon by Major-General Hale to award the crosses to those whose gallant deeds had been performed while General Edwards was still in command.

Three days later came the long-anticipated street parade of the Division in Boston. And for the last time it was possible to demonstrate the workmanlike methods of those officers who had, for many months, been charged with the duty of moving, subsisting, equipping, and billeting the troops. With no confusion the various units were brought into town, lodged, fed, formed for the parade, and returned to camp. In a fine spirit of coöperation every officer and man of the whole Division worked to show himself and his unit, from squad to regiment, to the best advantage. And Boston, who seemed that day to have taken to herself the whole population of New England, roared an approval and a welcome from the miles of towering reviewing-stands, from windows, curbstones, from every vantage-point, which never can be forgotten by those present. It should be remarked that the people did not view the Boston parade of the Twenty-Sixth as a spectacle, as an interesting, picturesque march of veteran troops. It was in a far different spirit that the crowds were cheering. They were welcoming home their own boys — their own blood, their kinsmen. They hailed the return not only of the soldiers of the United States, but also — and with shriller joy — the soldiers of their own home regiments. This is worth recording, one believes, on the last pages, as on the first, of this history of American citizen-soldiers in the European War. It is a record of the expression of that love for its own territorial, localized military unit which has always linked closely together the American community and the American soldier.

Last of all came the days of actual discharge from service. Again the patient personnel adjutants made out their endless rolls and records; again the officers and men were physically examined; on the 28th and 29th of the month, they received their pay and their papers, and moved away — once more civilians.

"SECURE FROM CHANGE"

Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave;
No bar of endless night exiles the brave;
  And to the saner mind
We rather seem the dead that stayed behind.
Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow!
For never shall their aureoled presence lack:
I see them muster in a gleaming row,
With ever youthful brows that nobler show;

We find in our dull road the shining track;
  In every nobler mood
We feel the orient of their spirit glow,
Part of our life's unalterable good,
Of all our saintlier aspiration;
  They come transfigured back
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
Of morn on their white shields of expectation!

So sang a New England poet of the returned soldiers from another war. One deprecates, in our American fashion, the tendency to catch and reflect the luster of exalted emotion in our own prosaic daily lives; one can vision the embarrassment of the average Yankee Division soldier, should he be told that he was a hero and must act accordingly. But true it is that these lads brought home with them, all unawares, perhaps, from months in the front line of battle, from suffering as from honorable achievement, from their plain duties conscientiously performed, a certain new value, a quickened sense of a man's responsibility to and for his fellows, which the years to come will see worked deeply into the very pattern and web of the fabric of our national ideals and life.

THE END

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